



The Nepali Army's Contribution to Nation Building

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Abstract

The nation-building process involves various approaches such as democratization, inclusiveness, promotion of nationalism, unification, internal restructuring for cultural promotion, and developmental activities to build the loyalty of peripheral people towards the centre. The Nepali State has been employing the Nepali Army as a strategic means to build the Nepali Nation. However, how the Nepali Army has contributed to nation building since its establishment is an area that is under-explored. Hence, this article focuses on some of these important strategies using nation-building theories. It is argued that the Nepali army has been significantly contributing to nation building through territorial unification, internal restructuring, and developmental activities in support of nation building since the unification of Modern Nepal. This study initially discusses the contribution of the Nepali Army in territorial unification by conquering principality states and internal restructuring through consolidation of administration and promotion of nationalism. Thereafter, it delves into the integration of local folk cultures to build the Nepali Culture and inscription symbols. Finally, the article analyses developmental works in support of nation building that connects peripheral remote places with the capital city Kathmandu. A conceptual framework based on Saunders' Research Onion Peeled Method is applied with purposive sampling and document study from John Galtung and Stein Rokkan's theoretical lenses has been applied. The article finds that the Nepali Army initially contributed to the nation building through a unification campaign before consolidating nationalism in the 1950. Further, the Nepali Army continued participating in development activities to link the periphery to the center.

Keywords: nation, nationalism, nation building, state building, national integration, national development

Introduction

Some scholars argue that the Nepali Army contributed significantly to Nation building. Others believe that the army contributed in state building rather than nation building during the nation

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formation process. However, state building is an essential step of nation building. Therefore, the Army contributed equally in both state and nation building. Some academicians believe that the Nepali Army could have contributed more in nation formation if employed appropriately. There are various nation-building theories referred to and practiced in the Nepali context (Bhat, 2021, p.1). This paper argues that the Army in Nepal has significantly been contributing to nation formation through territorial unification, internal restructuring, and developmental activities since the unification of Modern Nepal.

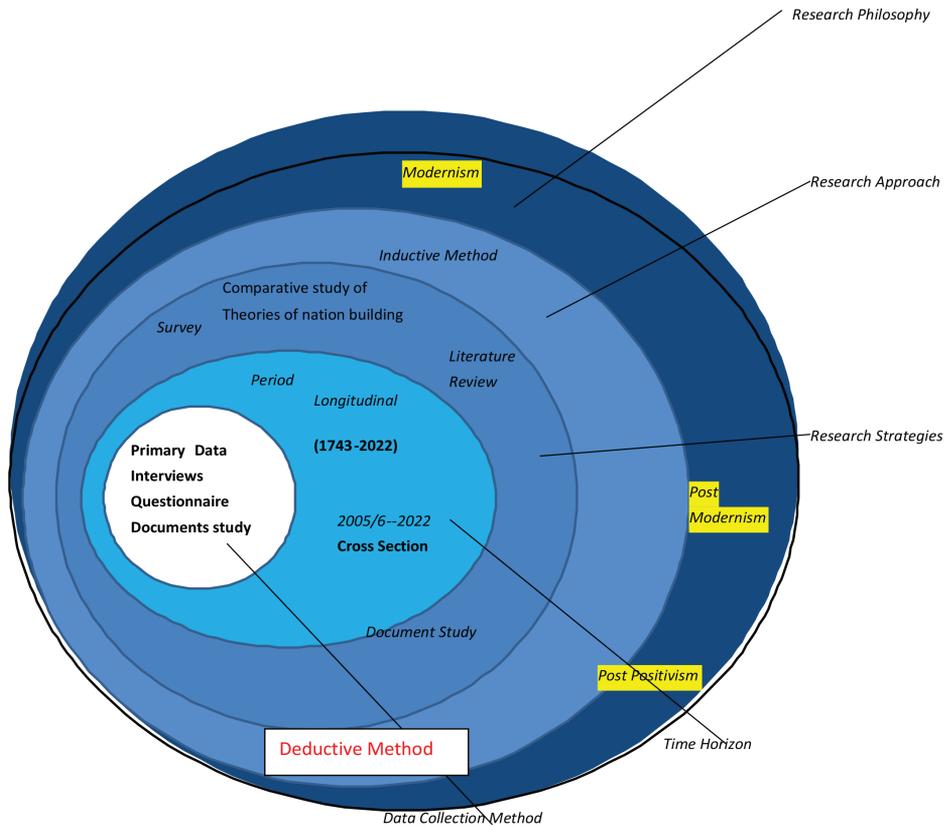
Different scholars have defined nation building differently in different times. For example, Mylona has referred Deutsch (1966), who said that nation building as constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state (Mylonas, 2012, p. 2). "State-building is influenced by various factors such as geopolitical, economic, social, cultural, ethnic, and religious during historical situation" (Gilmour-Bryson, 1998, p.1). Scholars and practitioners have interchangeably used State building and Nation building. In general, State building covers interventionist strategies to restore and rebuild the state institutions. Whereas, the Nation building process covers to construct political majorities (Mylonas, 2012 p.1). Most studies in Nepal have focused on Nation building theories (Poudyal, 1984; Shah, 1975; Poudyal, 2013), in general and democratization (Baral, 2010), social inclusion (Hachhethu, 2014), rather than how state actors of Nepal have been employing the Nepali Army as a strategic tool.

In the context of Nepal, It can be argued that despite the interference of internal and external forces, the process of nation building has been passing through various stages where the Nepali Army contributes in one way or another. For example, the Nepali Army contributed in State building during remarkable stages of territorial integration such as a process of unification until 1799, Treaty of Sugauli 1816, Rana Regime 1846-1951 and democratization in 1951-1962. The Army contributed through psychological and cultural unification 1962-1990, democratization period 1990-2005 and secular state 2005- to the present (Bhat, 2021 .p. 2). The purpose of this paper is to explore the contribution of the Nepali Army as a strategic tool in the process of nation building in Nepal.

Methodology

This paper employed the theoretical framework using Saunders' Research Onion Peeled (2007) based on relevant theories of John Galtung, Renan and Stein Rokkan to study the contribution of the Nepali Army in various stages of nation building in Nepal. A qualitative approach with phenomenology and historical methods have been utilized with to devise a study framework (Figure 1.1). Focused group interviews were conducted with historians, cultural activists and other experts with constructivist philosophical design and deductive approach. A research strategy with document study, survey and purposive sampling of 102 army officers, APF Officers, university students and scholars contributed their input to complete the study. A comparative documents study with phenomenology was equally utilized as a research method.

Fig 1



Source: Saunders' Research Onion Peeled (2007) method

This paper focuses initially on the role of army in territorial unification by conquering principality states and internal restructuring through effective administration and promotion of nationalism. Thereafter, it looks at the integration of local folk cultures to constitute the Nepali Culture and inscription symbols. Thirdly, the article analyses developmental work that connects peripheral remote places with the capital city of Kathmandu. It is necessary to review some literatures related to Nation building and some relevant theories.

Literature Review

Joshi and Rose (1966) emphasize the rationalization of the political process and administrative perspective and Shah deals with the problems of nation building in Nepal (Shah, 1975). The literature available about Nation building in Nepal covers the theoretical aspects and administration. However, it lacks substantial authentic writings on the Nepali Army's engagements in nation building as a strategic tool. Maj Gen (Retd) Tika Dhamala relates the Nepali Army with a strong sense of nationalism (2006), Col Dil Bikram Subba, writes about "Nepali Army's role in nation building process (Bhat, 2021,p.2). The first volume of Unity Journal published in 2020 contains six articles on Nepali Army's role in nation building. However, we are yet to explore the Nepali Army as a strategic tool of nation building.

Theoretical Approach

Some of the theories believe that nationalism precedes modernity whereas others argue that nationalism is created because of modernity. The conceptual theories related to Nation-building were specially discussed after the Second World War, although the concept of a nation implicitly started much before it. This term of Nation building gained momentum after mid of the twentieth century when great powers such as Great Britain, Portugal and France loosened control over their colonies and gave birth to newly liberated nation states (Stephenson, 2005, p. 2). Mainly, the theory of Rokkan (1975) and Galtung (1971) on the Center - periphery concept has been used to conduct the study for this paper. Renan's Approach is equally useful to analyse Army's role (Renan, 1996).

Rokkan's Theory consists of main four distinct phases. These phases were followed more or less in similar manner in Western Europe (Bhat, 2021, p.6).

The first phase as he mentioned resulted in economic and cultural unification at elite level. The second phase encompasses even larger sectors of the masses into the system through conscription into the army, enrolment in compulsory schools. The burgeoning mass media created channels for direct contact between the central elites and periphery populations and generated widespread feelings of identity with the political system at large (Flora, Kohnle & Urwin, 1999, p.1). In the third phase, the subject masses were brought into active participation in the workings of the territorial political system. Finally, in the last stage the administrative apparatus of the state expanded. (Flora, Kohnle & Urwin 1996, p.1)

Rokkan's theory is the product of the French Revolution and its impact in Western Europe. It partially assists to justify the role of the Army in nation building in Nepal.

According to Galtung, "Public welfare services were established and nation-wide policies for the equalization of economic conditions were designed" (Galtung, 1980, p.1). He further believed that there is conflict or disharmony of interest if the Local-Centre gap is increasing (Bhat, 2021, p.6). There is no conflict or harmony of interest if the gap is decreasing down to zero (Galtung, 1971, p. 82). Ernest Renan argues a nation is an entity based on acts of the free will of individuals forming a collective identity; in other words "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" (Renan, 1996, p.41). Renan further explains that "Two things, one lies in the past, and one in the present" (Bhat, 2021, p.6). Similarly, he believes that "one is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together " (Renan, 1996, p.41). Assimilation of theories were utilized to discuss the role of army in nation building Nepal.

Discussion

Some pertinent questions related to Nation building in Nepal are: when did nation building in Nepal begin? What geographical realities exist that influence nation building process throughout history? What was the context of geopolitical environment between 1743 and 2022 for nation building in Nepal? Who played an important role for nation building in Nepal? How has the Nepali Army been continuously involved in nation building in one

way or another? How did the Nepali Army contribute directly or indirectly to nation building? The answers of these questions provide the framework of the status of nation building in Nepal until 2022 and highlight the efforts of Nepali Army in nation building.

Nation builders in Nepal adopted a contextual accommodative, assimilationist or exclusive policy with economic, inclusive, governance, education, cultural, political, diplomatic, security, and inscription strategies (Bhat, 2021, p.7.). Renan shared that the European nation-forming experience was the mixture of races, origins, and religions, where conquering people often adopted the religion and manners and married the women, of the people they conquered (Bhat, 2021,p.1.). Galtung's centre to periphery approach is also relevant to study the formation of the Nepali nation state.

The Nepali Army as a Strategic Tool

Nation building is psychological process of building belongingness to construct political majorities. Hence, people residing within any territorial boundary, as is the case of Nepal, was possible only when there is territorial unification is achieved. People living in the diverse terrain of Nepal need to be facilitated through infrastructural development, which has been partly possible through the developmental work of the Nepali Army in remote areas of Nepal. It certainly worked to foster centre periphery relationship in Nepal. Inscription symbols like sports, national anthem, national dress, ritual ceremonies, national festivals and participation in UN have also contributed to act as tools of supporting nationalism.

Historical Process of Nation Formation

It can be argued that the trajectories of Nation building in Nepal emanates from the common mutually understandable shared history of Nepalese society. In the global context, the oldest history of nation-states of Europe, along the Atlantic rim, the earliest stage of Nation building commenced in the middle ages and lasted until the French Revolution. "While it is impossible to pinpoint exactly when the entire Nation-building process commenced, it certainly went on for several centuries. In the ideal variant, each consecutive phase set in only after the previous one had run its course. This ensured the lowest possible level of social upheavals and disruptions" (Rokkan, 1999, p.570).

The discourse of nation formation in Nepal holds multidimensional approaches where trajectories of basic ingredients of nation building such as language, culture, geography, etc. emanate from earlier historical times (Bhat, 2021,p.1.) These ingredients were limited to local and fragmented ways conforming to the principality states. The Nation-building process that began in Nepal in a consolidated way provided unified direction only after the unification period. Hence, the unification of modern Nepal by the late King Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors using the Nepali Army as a strategic tool assisted in building Nepali identity and nationhood. In the later period, the belongingness and promotion of nationalism continued through different approaches by state actors using Nepali Army. The following paragraphs discuss the debate over how the Nepali Army contributed to nation building as a strategic tool.

Geopolitical Trends

The global environment within which the nature of state and statecraft functions has been significantly changing in terms of global reach, information, and communication, interdependence, socioeconomic complexity, global power dynamics and nature of threats in nation building. The waves of nation building emanate from powerful states resonating across its periphery based on its capacity and continues with adaptation or transforms its shape into renewed power sphere. For instance, the US involvement in nation building in Panama, invasion of US and its allies in Iraq, and Afghanistan, NATO involvement in Yugoslavia, Russian involvement in Baltic States, etc. are a few examples. In the context of Nepal, on one hand, nation building has proved to be endlessly contentious internally, like many socio-economic and political issues. On the other hand, Nepal has been continuously facing direct and indirect influences of international actors to exploit its geopolitical situation in their favour externally (Bhandari, 2015, p.2).

Mylonas and Darden (2015) argue that the international environment in which a state develops partially determines the extent of its linguistic commonality and national cohesion (Mylonas & Darden, 2015, p.4). Specifically, the presence of an external threat of territorial conquest or externally supported secession leads governing elites to have stronger incentives to pursue strategies of Nation building to promote sense of belonging (Mylonas & Darden, 2015, p.4), comparing cases with similar levels of initial linguistic heterogeneity, state capacity, and development, but exist in different international environments. Local folk cultural groups and immigrants during different period of history in Nepal have been accommodated into Nepali culture. However, Political changes in Nepal since the last five decades have been influenced by external actors, such as with the case to review the citizenship criteria. This issue is likely to influence the future of Nepal's Nation building process (Bhat, 2021, p.8).

Territorial Unification

An argument can be made that the Nepali Army contributed to an extension of external boundaries, which ultimately contributed to Nation building. According to theory of Stein Rokkan, as mentioned above, the first state of Nation building is an expansion of territorial boundary through campaigns and battles using armed forces and the consolidation of internal infrastructures. He studied the case of the French Revolution where the French military was used to unify France and military conscription was the order of the day to consolidate the gain (Bhat, 2021, p.1). This saw the recruitment in the military from the rural areas and training through modernized military means; centralized administration through governing ideology and Nation-building measures to the link between rural France and centre using various Nation building strategies; e.g. education, integrated culture, conscription in the military, participation in state mechanism and education in French language. Nation building in Nepal can be discussed in a similar approach (Bhat, 2021, p.7).

Nepal was divided into small principalities. The situation was similar to the Indian subcontinent. Industrialization process started in Western Europe (1740-1830). Economic interests of Britain, France and Portugal were expanding around the world. The British East India Company was forming in India. The Chinese Emperor was in existence in the

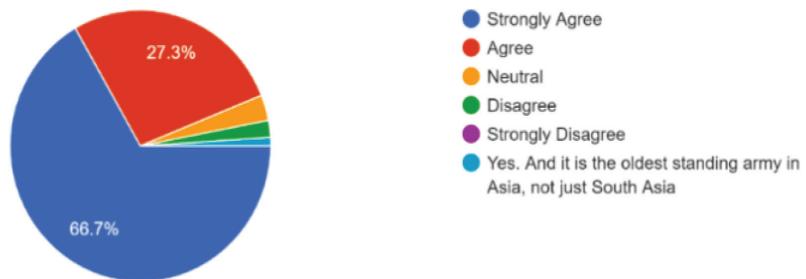
China. Tibet was in existence as an independent country (Bhat, 2021, p.1). Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors succeeded in unifying the principalities and expanding the external boundaries of state up to Tista in the East and Sutlej in the West, adopting a multicultural system with recognizing Kathmandu as the capital of a unified Nepal. Nepali became the official language of the State, Hinduism as principal basis of legal provision and decision-making (Bhat, 2021, p.1).

This period was followed by the loss of territory east of Mechi and west of Mahakali because of the Anglo Nepal War. British East India Company was not only consolidating its control over Indian Territory but also exerting pressure to intervene in the Nepali State (Bhat, 2021, p.11). Regaining Naya Muluk, Banke Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur as a result of the Nepali Army's assistance in successfully quelling the Indian Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Religion was a strong basis of making decisions. Consolidation of state took place with a strong administration using the Army as a principal tool. Socio cultural transformations such as the adoption of Nepal in place of the Gorkha Kingdom and Nepali language to KHAS KURA was reinforced along with consolidation of the taxation system.

In the Nepalese context as mentioned above, the Army contributed to state formation by conquering the lands initially during the unification campaign and acquisition of *Naya Muluk* of Banke Bardia Kailali and Kanchanpur in response to military assistance to British Indian rulers. The Nepali Army, as mobilized during various internal security duties like operation against Khampas, Bajhang Operation, suppression of Hindu Muslim riots at Rautahat District, Okhaldhunga operation, counterinsurgency operation during the decade long Maoist insurgency, etc. are some examples of application of Rokkan's theory in Nepal. Participants were asked for responses to the assertion that the Nepali Army is one of the oldest armies among the Asian Armies [sic: the NA is the oldest standing army in Asia] and has contributed to an extension of external boundaries, which ultimately contributed to nation building (Figure 2). The response is illustrated in figure 2 below. More than 90% participants agreed with the statement.

Figure 2

Question No 1. Nepali Army is one of the oldest armies among the South Asian Armies. Nepali Army contributed to an extension of external ...ich ultimately contributed to nation-building.
99 responses



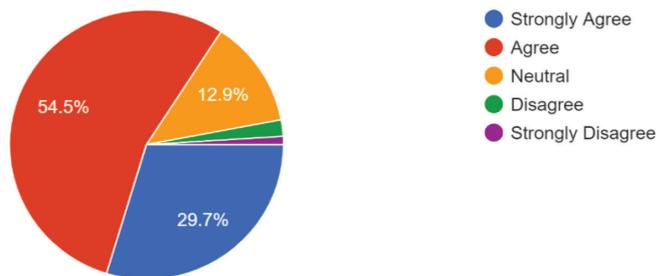
Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 99 Respondents

Ernest Gellner believes that nation building is the process of forming political majorities through coinciding the political boundaries with cultural boundaries. In the Nepalese context, principality states were integrated to expand the territorial boundaries and recruitment in Nepalese Army from rural Nepal assisted in psychological unification during unification. Folk culture was accommodated to form Nepalese culture. Participants were asked, "Army has been promoting nationalism through the harmonisation of cultural boundaries with political boundaries. Apparently, the majority of soldiers recruited from the peripheral population represent popular culture when diffused with elite culture while serving in army and retirement contributes to national Nepali Culture" (Figure 3). More than three fourths of the participants agreed with the contribution in Nation building and 13% maintained neutral position, while 2 % disagreed with this statement.

Figure 3.

Question No 3. Nepali Army has been promoting nationalism through the harmonisation of cultural boundaries with political boundaries. In ot... retirement contributes to national Nepali Culture.

101 responses

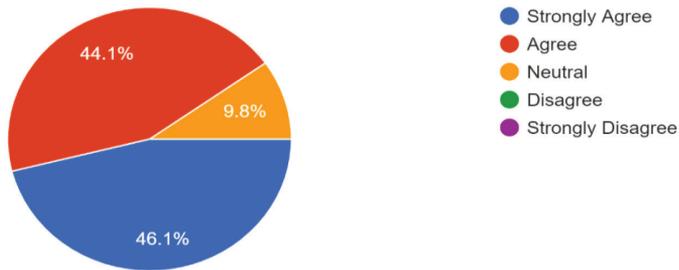


Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 99 Respondents.

Although the Army has been contributing in preserving national sovereignty as its crucial role, Army leaders need to strike a balance in military diplomacy while expanding military cooperation bearing in mind the geopolitical sensitivity of the Nepali nation (Figure 4). Nepali national identity has been shaped through the cultural trajectories emanating from historical times, which shares roots with other South Asian nations. World powers has been significantly exploiting the geostrategic importance of Nepal between two Asian giant nations India and China. Hence, the Nepali Army has been playing important role through military diplomacy and UN Peace Support Operations. More than 90% respondents agreed with the view and 10% maintained a neutral position. It indicates that military leadership needs to strike a balance in conducting military relation with other countries in terms of joint training, diplomatic mission and accepting military grants.

Figure 4.

Question No 6. Although Army has been contributing in preserving national sovereignty through the crucial role, Army leaders need to strike...d the geopolitical sensitivity of the Nepali nation.
102 responses



Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 102 Respondents

When King Prithvi Narayan Shah was in a process of uniting small states of 22 (Baise) and 24 (Chaubise) in the Far West and Western regions of Nepal in 1743, the academic discipline of sociology was yet to come into existence (Bhat, 2021,p.1). Neither was the concept of modern nationhood in a concrete shape, which could have been referred by then Nepali state rulers or state authority as suggested by Max Weber (2021,p.2). Rather, a concept of monarchical state based on religion as principle perspective for interpreting administrative matters was in existence (2021 p.18). Similar scenario of scattered tiny states with difficulties in power and frequent expansion and contraction of territory existed not only in Nepal but also in all over the *Bharat Khand* (Indian Sub-continent). Meanwhile, the British Empire was in expansionist mode, based on economic interest driven by industrialisation. The military was the principle tool to unite such small states in Nepal to build a strong Nepali State, which could safeguard its economic and sovereign interests, balancing the geographical realities.

Promotion of Nationalism and Cultural Approach

An argument can be made that the unification of Nepal follows the integration of local folk cultures to build the Nepali Culture and inscription symbols. Nation building in France and Italy and other nations in Western Europe followed similar steps. In Nepal, For example, King Prithvi Narayan Shah accommodated the cultural practices of Kathmandu valley to build a national culture by developing Kathmandu valley as the capital city (Bhat, 2021, p.2). The Army was made inclusive from the beginning and the tradition of religious practices, celebration of festivals, uniform and other formal dress codes were followed. Khas Kura, a language usually practicing in West Nepal, was later named as the Nepali language. Late King Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors laid the foundation of the Nepali nation, which later adapted with the geopolitical condition of Nepal (Bhat, 2021, p.2).

Culture

Cristina Rossi referred the word "culture" from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture (Zimmermann,

2017, p.1). Examples of some cultures are Western Culture, Eastern Culture, Latin Culture, Mid-Eastern Culture etc. In addition to ancient Kirati, Licchivi and other dynasties, Nepal's cultural routes emanates from mainly four civilizations of ancient Nepal; first Mithila one-time Dehoa Kingdom of King Janak, Buddhism originating from Shakya Dynasty in western Terai , Kathmandu Based civilization and Doti and Khas Kingdom of Jumla on the West.

It means that the role of the Army can be considered during unification campaign, internal defence and development, national development or building nationalism. History of the Nepali Army begins with the history of Modern Nepal since the reign of late King Prithvi Narayan Shah from the tiny Gorkha Kingdom in 1743 AD (Bhat, 2021, p.2). Nepal's Nation building, like many other states, was essentially linked to the security and survival of the nation-state as a unique and separate political entity. In the process, the rulers emphasized a non-national culture or a dominant culture that projects the uniqueness of the Nation state. However, emphasis on a single culture, language and religion as national has inevitably met with further challenges.

Language

Language is one of the dominant dimensions of Nation state despite the requirement to preserve vernacular languages of Nepal. Nepali language is one of the important factors to unite the diversity of Nepali Nation state. Investigations of archaeology and history indicate that modern Nepali is a descendant of the language spoken by the ancient Khasha people (Pokhrel, 2018, p. 15).

Conscription and National Service

Scholars of nationalism have long noted significance of military conscription for nation formation. For instance, in Russia the commencement of conscription in 1874 drew from the idea that "obligatory participation in military service... presents the best means for the weakening of tribal differences among the people" (Sanborn, 2002, p. 12), while in Weber (1921), a classic study, one of the mechanisms that turned "peasants into Frenchmen" in the late 19th century was military service. In Africa, "many countries have similarly promoted obligatory military conscription and/or national service for secondary school or university students as a means to integrate their citizens" (Bandyopadhyay, 2013, p.118).

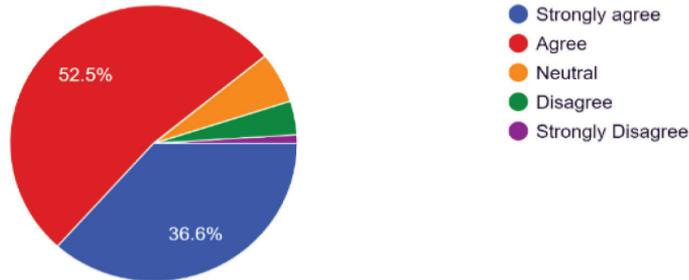
Nation building through military service around the world justifies the NA's role in nation formation in Nepal. In Cote d'Ivoire, for instance, male citizens over the age of 21 are asked to serve 6 months in the military. More recently, Sudan national service act mandated 2 years of national service, Eritrea mandated conscription after its independence in 1994, (Kibreab, 2009, p. 44). Other governments have instead promoted non-military national service" (Bandyopadhyay, 2013, p.118). For instance, Hailie Selassie's government created the Ethiopian University Service in 1964, which mandated a year's streak of schooling for all university students between their third and fourth years to serve in a rural area for one year" (Bandyopadhyaya,2013,p.118).

The Guinean government started a political education course in 1961 for secondary school students; by 1971, students were instead sent to join the national popular militia whose explicit purpose was to secure national frontiers (Harber, 1989, pp. 145, 154). The Zambian National Service, which previously only drew primary school graduates, was redesigned in

1975 to enroll all university students for twenty months alongside teachers and party leaders for shorter periods. In the Nepalese context, while always remaining a professional volunteer force (no conscription), the Nepali Army unification campaign onwards till today has assisted in promoting belongingness, and diffusion of local culture in the formation of Nepali Culture. The Army, through inclusive recruitment and career development and welfare programmes for retired military personnel has been instilling belongingness and promoting nationalism. Almost 90% of the respondents agreed with the statement and Nepali Army has been promoting Nepali culture not only within the nation but also around the world through participation in peacekeeping missions, and in military training and diplomatic missions around the world.

Figure 5.

Question No 2. Nepali Army while unification campaign onwards till today assisted in creating a sense of belongingness, and diffusion of local culture in the formation of Nepali Culture.
101 responses

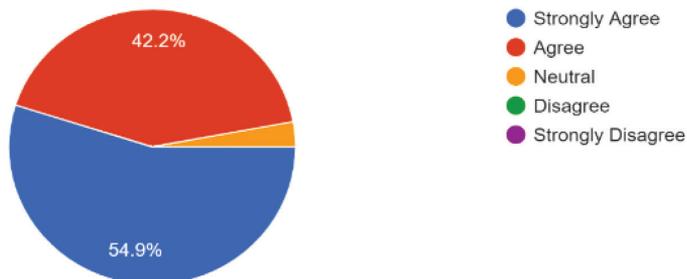


Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 101 Respondents

The Army has been contributing to promoting nationalism by preserving values of inscription symbols like the national anthem, ritual ceremonies, active participation and organization of sports, Nepali Language, and national festivals (Figure 6).

Figure 6.

Question No 4. Nepali Army has been contributing to promoting nationalism by preserving values of inscription symbols like the national anth...f sports, Nepali Language, and national festivals.
102 responses

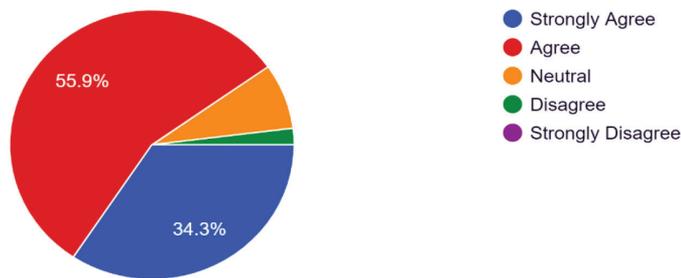


Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 102 Respondents

The Army contributed to the development of sports, recruiting talents from all over Nepal, and facilitating to train and participation in national and international competitions. This human resources development ultimately contributes to building a sense of belongingness and nationalism. (Figure 7)

Figure 7.

Question No 9. Nepali Army contributed to the development of sports, recruiting talents from rural areas, and facilitating to train and participa...building a sense of belongingness and nationalism.
102 responses



Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 102 Respondents

Nationalism

Nationalism is a key factor in Nation building. Patriotic feeling, which is the derivative of binding love to the land, is the soul of a Nation state. The formation, the unification and the survival of our country are the result of cohesiveness and dedication of our ancestors who joined their hands together during foreign invasions. Present concept of nationalism has become more narrowly confined to a limited number of people, which if exploited, would be disastrous for Nation building of the country. However, as Nation building is the responsibility of state, a state having no strong political will, diplomatic maneuver and dedicated security forces will have less opportunity to undergo nation-building activities. Some scholars even go so far as to argue that Nepal was indeed a military state because it was the mainstay of political power (Baral, 2016, p.61).

Historically, the military was considered as a 'school for the nation,' and its apparent success was emulated as far away as Russia and Japan (Krebs, 2004, p.85). Stephen argued that modern militaries of South Asia reflect one of the central accomplishments and enduring legacies of the British Empire. He further articulates that the military organization that emerged on the subcontinent in the early twentieth century proved a force for conservative continuity across the radical political and cultural diversities of Indian society (Stephen, 1971, p.2). The Nepali Army has also been contributing to national unity and is considered as a crucial factor of national unity.

Nepali Army administration cites the importance of inclusiveness in the army, noting that the racial and cultural character of the army is not a mirror image of the national picture but it depicts a picture which is far closer than most of the other organs of the state (Nepali Army, 2022). Further, the recruitment in the Nepali Army is voluntary and competitive. The Army has been making a conscious effort in making army inclusive (Nepali Army, 2022).

Economic and Developmental Work

The contribution of the Army in developmental work significantly supported the promotion of belongingness and nationalism, which ultimately supported Nation building through the connection of peripheral remote places with the center capital city of Kathmandu. King Mahendra's period, 1955-1972, was notable for a wide variety of experiments on Nation building including the establishment of Nepal Rast Bank, National Highway system, education system, consolidated administration system with visionary foreign policy in psychologically unifying the nation.

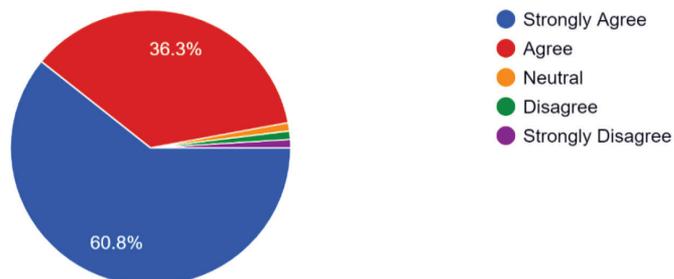
The Nepali Army first built roads for the purpose of war to supply foodstuffs and logistics cargos from one place to another. These roads were upgraded into modern roads. Prithvi Narayan Shah's troops had built forts and trails, which were turned into roads in later days. Nepal's first modern road was built in Kathmandu around 1923. In 1960. The Army built the Kathmandu Tikabhairab to Hetauda road and with the assistance of Indian government, the Tribhuvan highway was built which linked the Terai with Kathmandu (Adhikari, 2016, p.49).

Adhikari argues that democracy and blacktopped roads were in place around the same period in Nepal. After conflict heightened in Nepal, the Army began to get more responsibilities to construct roads of national strategic importance. The Nepali Army has gained special experience and expertise through its works in challenging terrains. Most of the remote districts like Dolpa, Kalikot, Mugu, Mustang, Manag, Humla (under construction) Solukhumbu, Okhaldhunga, Bhojpur have been connected by roads built by the Nepali Army.

Infrastructural development plays a pivotal role to facilitate movement and access to the center for the peripheral population living in remote places of Nepal. The Nepali Army has been pioneering in building roads and tracks to connect these areas. Army also has been contributing to disaster relief operations, demining projects, peacekeeping operations and building highways. All these aspects contribute a crucial role (Figure 8). Majority of participants (87%) agreed that Army's participation in developmental works particularly roads and tracks has been facilitating peripheral population to access their national and provincial geographical capitals and economic centers.

Figure 8.

Question No 5. Infrastrual development plays an important role to facilate movement and access to centre for peripheral population living in ...pects contribute to nation-building a crucial role.
102 responses



Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 102 respondents

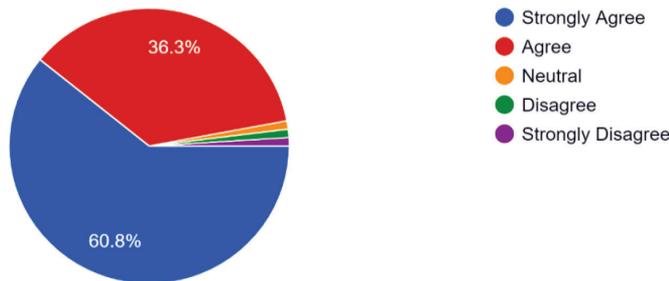
The Army should assist in building mega projects like Kathmandu Terai Fast Track instead of taking the full responsibility to build such projects. That would promote civil-military relations and present a good image of the Army while imparting security duties (Figure 9). Respondents have shown complicated views on this question. Building Kathmandu Terai Fast Track and similar projects in future are not recommended by one third of the participants whereas almost one fourth maintained their neutral position. Only less than one-fourth participants showed their disagreement with the statement.

Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 102 respondents

The Army has been significantly contributing to economic development through remittance from UN Peacekeeping operations, producing trained workforce for supplying security guards, NCC training for Youths and acquiring a reputation in peace support operation duties amongst other armies of the world (Figure 10). Most of the participants agree with the positive aspects of participation in peacekeeping mission and promotion of national identity around international arena. It equally contributed in economic development, which assists in promoting nationalism and sense of belongingness.

Figure 9.

Question No 5. Infrastructural development plays an important role to facilitate movement and access to centre for peripheral population living in ...pects contribute to nation-building a crucial role.
102 responses



Note: Figure constructed by the researcher based on survey result from 102 respondents

All evidences presented in above paragraphs justified the significant contribution of the Army in national development and national integration. Survey result displayed in Figure10 highlights the view of two third responders in favour of positive role of Army in national development and national integration. It tends to continue in future to enhance the access of rural /periphery population to the centre through development of infrastructure and communication along with national integration (Bhat, 2021, p.13). The geopolitical status of Nepal is one of the likely factors of attracting foreign actors in nation building and state building of Nepal where strength and employment of army kept on difficulties in different periods of Nepali history (p.13).

National planners have come up with some conceptual plans concerning security and road network based on priority. It is from this conceptual plan that the Army is tasked for

various projects. In fact, the Nepali Army is mostly assigned construction of roads in the most difficult and mountainous terrain because these projects require many explosives, which can remain safe and secure only if kept within the army barracks. Therefore, the researcher is of the view that most of the remote and rocky road projects have to be handed over to the Nepali Army rather than to civil authorities. Hence, whichever government comes to power, such road construction projects should always be in the national interest and national vision rather than personal interest.

Community Services and Construction Works

Social work activities are development activities carried out by Nepali Army in the adjacent villages along the road constructions for the community development to uplift the living standard of the local people. As of 2056/57, B.S. policy has been approved by National Planning Commission to allow spending one percent of the Total budget being allocated for social work within the planned area of construction. Some of such activities are as below.

- (a) Providing drinking water facilities.
- (b) Construction of micro-hydro projects for the generation of electricity.
- (c) Managing veterinary clinic with the help of veterinary doctors.
- (d) Imparting technologies to the locals in the production of briquette as being more convenient.
- (e) Providing health services and distribution of medicines to the needy and elderly people.
- (f) To enhance public health and sanitation awareness programs. To construct toilets and impart knowledge in building such toilets,
- (g) To repair and maintain the existing roads.
- (h) To produce and distribute hybrid seeds and impart agricultural education.
- (i) To encourage and motivate local people in the participation of tree plantation.
- (j) Awareness programs on preservation of environment.

Preservation of Natural Heritages, National Parks and Wildlife

The Nepali Army has been contributing to preserve Nepal's natural beauty, home of rich and varied biodiversity, altitudinal variance, forests and sparse alpine deserts to vast grassland in the low land Terai. The mountainous country also shelters world's rare animals and birds. Sagarmatha National Park and Royal Chitwan National Park with their unique natural cultural characteristics were listed as World Heritage Sites in 1974 and 1994 respectively.

Disaster Management

The Nepali Army was deployed for search, rescue and relief operations after the massive earthquakes of 7.6 Richter scale in Barpak, Gorkha and 6.8 Richter scale in Kodari, Dolakha. The Army HQ had directed its formations, units and subunits to take necessary action for Search and Rescue operations. More than 8848 lost their lives and 22309 people were injured.

More than eight, 74,472 government buildings and houses have been destroyed in the affected areas.

Findings

The survey result, document study and phenomenological study find the following:

- (1) The Nepali Army, the oldest Army of Asia significantly contributed in territorial unification, consolidation in the governance system and cultural unification as symbol of national unity in Nepali identity and nationalism.
- (2) Recruitment in the Army from all over Nepal, training in the army and rehabilitation of retired personnel in society around the countryside have been promoting a sense of belongingness and nationalism.
- (3) Active participation in developmental work since its establishment has been supporting to foster the access of the rural population to the centre. It has ultimately been supporting the nation-building process.

Conclusion

This study mainly focussed on answering the questions: What was the status of the historical process of nation building in Nepal? What was the role of Nepali Army, particularly in building a sense of belongingness and promoting nationalism? In addition, how has the Nepali Army been contributing to national development to support the nation building process? The findings suggest that the Nepali Army has been augmenting in Nation building in Nepal directly or through the State building process since its establishment even until today. The indicators of relevant theories considered during the research confirms the contribution of the Army in Nation building. The research concludes that by adopting the global trends, the Nepali Army significantly contributed as a strategic tool to bind the country together and build the national identity through various works. The Army can also be conclusively considered a factor of national unity.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Army must be involved in national development without compromising its core responsibilities of protection of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Army must take responsibility based on its capability and maintain the image of the Nepali Army as a vital national institution of trust and confidence of Nepalese people.

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