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The national vision of King Prithvi Narayan Shah and its influence on contemporary policy discourse in Nepal

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Abstract

Morgenthau defines national interest as the survival of the state, especially the protection of physical, political, and cultural identity against encroachment by other states. The study aims at decoding the national objectives envisioned by King Prithvi Narayan Shah with national interest as an independent variable and three dependent variable's physical identity, economic identity, and cultural identity. It also focuses on analyzing the influences of national objectives determined by King Prithvi Narayan Shah on the present policies of Nepal. The study is qualitative in design and primarily based on secondary data. It adopts a realist approach to defining national interest. The wars on the Himalayan fronts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were directed to control Trans Himalayan trade routes and monopolize the trade between central, south, and East Asia. Nepal's east-west unification campaign to control Trans Himalayan trade routes is assessed as the national objective embedded in the promotion of the economic interest of Nepal. King Prithvi Narayan Shah also wished to conquer the southern plain land and extend the border up to the river Ganges. The study presents the idea 'who commands the Himalayas that rules the Indian subcontinent', highlighting the importance of the Himalayas. King Prithvi Narayan Shah also highlighted the importance of the preservation of cultural identity as a fundamental national interest of Nepal, understanding the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic characteristics of Nepal. It is identified that the national interests and objectives envisioned by King Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors influence the present policies of Nepal.

Keywords: Trans Himalayan, national interests, Divya Upadesh, identity, unification



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Introduction

National objectives are the goals that are derived from national interests and serve as a guiding framework for the resource allocation and actions of the government. National interests are permanent, whereas national objectives are dynamic in nature and change according to regional and geopolitical circumstances. States are the key actors in international relations, which interact with each other with the aim of fulfilling their national interests. National security is always an unavoidable national interest of any state. National interests are the goals, objectives, and interests that a state always wants to promote and preserve in interaction with other states. In international relations, no state interacts with other states without any interest. States always want to secure their interests while interacting with other states. National interest is first used as *regimen degli stati* (reason of state) by Italian writer and diplomat Giovanni Della Casa around 1547 (Burns, 1991). Jock Donnelly (2000) defines national interest as the pursuit of security, wealth, and power in relation to others. Gordon de Brouwer (2020) has explained security, prosperity, and social well-being as the three fundamental components of national interest. The state formulates its national interest as a part of global interest to achieve prosperity, security, quality of life, and resilience while interacting with other nations (Colglazier, 2021).

Hans J. Morgenthau explained national interest from a realist perspective and highlights power as a key element in relation to other states. Morgenthau defines national interest as the survival of the state, especially the protection of physical, political, and cultural identity against encroachment by other states (Kiyono, 1969). National interests and national security determine national objectives, and these objectives are achieved through domestic and foreign policies. The national objectives of the state should be the preservation of physical, political, and cultural identity, which are equated to the protection of territorial integrity, the existing politico-economic system, and ethnic, religious, and linguistic norms of the state, respectively. Every state considers the preservation of physical identity and its survival as a core value that it always wants to protect at any cost. Therefore, national interest includes the state's survival, the economic well-being of the people, and the preservation of the social, cultural, historical, and linguistic identity of the state.

The study aims at decoding the national objectives envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah with national interest as an independent variable and three dependent variable's physical identity, economic identity, and cultural identity. King Prithivi Narayan Shah defeated the Malla King of Kathmandu valley in 1769, unified Nepal, and formed a modern state. King Prithivi Narayan Shah launched the unification campaign with the aim of unifying Nepal and ensuring its existence. A divided and weak state cannot survive and is more likely to be invaded by colonial powers. The British East India Company, which was established as a strong power in the Indian sub-continent, posed an imminent threat to the existence of Nepal. The foremost national interest envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah is the protection of physical integrity and survival of Nepal (Basnyat, 2021). His successors, King Pratap Singh Shah and Rana Bahadur Shah, Regent Bahadur Shah, Rajendra Laxmi Devi Shah, and Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa, also continued the unification campaign and expanded the territory of Nepal to the Tista River in the east and Kangra in the west. Nepal's military campaign towards the north was severely affected by the involvement of China in the Nepal-Tibet war in 1792 A.D.

The Betrawati Treaty of 1792 A.D. limited Nepal's northern border with Tibet. The loss of one-third territory in the Anglo-Nepal war and the 'Treaty of Seagull' of 1816 A.D. also crushed the east-west military campaign of Nepal. The study analyzes the causes behind the east-west unification campaigns and the economic interests of Nepal in waging war with Tibet and China in the late eighteenth century from a realist perspective based on *Divya Upadesh* of King Prithivi Narayan Shah. The study provides an in-depth analysis of the linkage between the national interests envisioned by King Prithvi Narayan Shah and the national objectives adopted by his successors. It also focuses on analyzing the influences of national objectives determined by King Prithivi Narayan Shah on the present policies of Nepal.

Literature Review

It is very important to understand the national objectives determined by King Prithivi Narayan Shah and how those objectives are followed by his successors. There are differences among scholars regarding the national interest prioritized by King Prithivi Narayan Shah and how those objectives have shaped the national interest of Nepal at present. The main objective of this section is to discuss the interpretation of the national interests of different scholars envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah in *Divya Upadesh*.

Jock Donnelly (2000), and Gordon de Brouwer (2020), and Hans J. Morgenthau's (Date??) definition of national interests are reviewed to understand the meanings of national interests as well as to identify their fundamental elements. Nirmal Raj Joshi (2023), in his book '*Divya Upadesh from King Prithvi Narayan Shah*', presented the message of King Prithivi Narayan Shah from the records and manuscripts of Yogi Narahari Nath and Baburam Acharya. The book is considered a foundational literature to analyze the national interests and national objectives envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah. Mohan Mainali's (2023) book entitled '*Mukam Ranamaidan*' is reviewed to analyze the understanding of Nepali soldiers and field commanders regarding the military objectives and how those objectives were aligned with the national objectives envisioned by King Prithivi. The letter written by a low-ranking military commander to higher political and military leaders during the Anglo-Nepal war, 1814-1816, is assessed to examine the linkage between military objectives and national interest (Mainali, 2023).

Gaurav Bhattra (2022) states the national security strategies with reference to *Divya Upadesh* of King Prithivi Narayan Shah. The author tries to examine the relationship between history and policy by rediscovering the national security strategies based on *Divya Upadesh*. The author's interpretation of national security objectives is explored to explain other objectives envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah (Bhattra, 2022). Surendra Singh Rawal (2022) explains the military strategies and the implications of instruments, especially diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments, formulated by King Prithivi Narayan Shah during the unification campaign. The author also mentions the understanding of King Prithivi Narayan Shah on the regional security context and his policy of isolation for the survival of the nation. However, the author also criticized Bhimsen Thapa for the diplomatic failure of making alliances with other states of the Indian subcontinent, and also failed to formulate a correct strategy during the Anglo-Nepal war, 1814-16 A.D. (Rawal, 2022). The

literature helps to compare the military strategies of King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors, especially Bahadur Shah and Bhimsen Thapa.

Uttam B. Khatri (2021) mentions the lifelong effort of King Prithivi Narayan Shah to unify Nepal and establish it as an independent state during the colonial era. The author also explains that there were several small states surviving from Assam to Kashmir (east-west) and the rivers Ganges and Brahmaputra to the south. The east-west territorial expansion of Nepal, even after the demise of King Prithivi Narayan Shah, by his successors, is significant for the survival of Nepal. It is also defined as the effort of King Prithivi Narayan Shah to preserve the cultural identity of Nepal by respecting the culture of the people of the invaded states and guaranteeing equal cultural rights to all citizens (Khatri, 2021). Madhu Raman Acharya (2023) explains that foreign policy should be directed to pursue and promote the national interest, understand the interests of neighbors and great powers, and adjust policies, assessing the changes in geopolitics. The author recommends maintaining good relationships with immediate neighbors and taking advantage of their economic growth. Nepal should advocate for regional cooperation and consider the power shift in international politics to promote national interests (Acharya, 2023). This literature is found relevant to analyze the challenges of foreign policies in the present context.

Policy Review

According to the Constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 5, *National Interest (1) states* “*Safeguarding of the freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, nationality, independence and dignity of Nepal, the rights of the Nepalese people, border security, economic wellbeing and prosperity shall be the basic elements of the national interest of Nepal*”. Similarly, Article 50 directive principles sub article (4) explains the policy regarding the conduct of international relations, and Article 51 policies of the states define the state’s policy relating to national unity, political and governance system, social, cultural, and economic aspects.

Nepal’s Foreign Policy 2020 states that the fundamental interests of the nation remain permanent. However, the priorities of the national interest can be changed considering the regional, global, and geopolitical circumstances. There is a clear constitutional policy regarding the national interest and international relations of Nepal. The study also examines the influence of Divya Upadesh on the present national interests of Nepal.

The reviewed literature generally explains the messages (Divya Upadesh) of King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his unification campaign. A few literatures also define the military strategies adopted by King Prithivi Naryan Shah. The reviewed literature hardly explains King Prithivi policies, considering national interests from a realist approach. The study focuses on identifying the historical continuity and linkage of Divya Upadesh in the present national interest of Nepal. The paper primarily focuses on identifying the physical identity, economic interest, and cultural identity as fundamental national interests envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah.

Methodology

The study aims to examine the physical identity and economic and cultural interest envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors, as well as the historical

continuation and linkage of Divya Upadesh to the present national interest of Nepal. The study is qualitative in design and primarily based on secondary data collected from various journal articles, books, and websites. The policy regarding national interests is based on the constitutional provisions and foreign policy of Nepal. Similarly, the continuation of the vision of King Prithivi is analyzed through the various policies adopted by his successors. The study adopts a realist approach to defining national interest. It defines national interest as an independent variable and physical identity, economic identity, and cultural identity as sub-variables.

Discussion and Analysis

National Objectives Envisioned During the Unification Period

Gordon de Brouwer (2020) explains security, prosperity, and social well-being as the three fundamental components of national interest. Security encompasses national security, territorial/physical integrity, prosperity includes economic and social well-being, contains preservation and promotion of social, cultural, and religious values. The territorial expansion and preservation, economic prosperity, and preservation of socio-cultural values of Nepal were the fundamental national interests during the unification period. The national objectives are formulated in the national interest. The territorial expansion of Nepal is assessed as a national objective embedded in the preservation and promotion of physical identity. The control of trans Himalayan trade routes is assessed as the national objective embedded in the promotion of economic interest, and the preservation of cultural identity is assessed as another national objective directed to strengthen the social, cultural, and religious values of Nepal. The physical and economic objectives are assessed moving parallel during unification campaigns.

Conquest of Nuwakot

According to Lakshman B. Hamal (1995), a failed attack to capture the strategically significant Nuwakot, which was under the suzerainty of the Kantipur kingdom, was launched by Nar Bhupal Shah, king of Gorkha and father of Prithivi Narayan Shah. King Prithivi Narayan Shah again launched an attack the second time to capture Nuwakot in 1743 A.D., immediately after he came to the throne after the demise of his father, and he failed to capture Nuwakot again. In 1744 A.D., King Prithivi Narayan Shah, learning lessons from the past attacks, launched a multidirectional attack against Nuwakot with great preparation and conquered Nuwakot (Hamal, 1995). It is important to analyze the causes of targeting Nuwakot with the employment of all instruments of national power. The Gorkha kingdom conquered Nuwakot on its third attempt, after the previous defeat twice; however, the Gorkha kingdom never stopped its offensive operations and captured Nuwakot because of its strategic importance. Geo-strategically, Nuwakot is the northern gateway to Kathmandu valley, and its geo-economic importance was that Nuwakot was a lucrative trade route between Nepal and Tibet. Therefore, the immediate aim of capturing Nuwakot is to achieve the aim of conquering the Kathmandu valley ultimately. On the other hand, the Gorkha kingdom was economically weak; the economic benefits through taxation after the control of the trade route across the Himalaya would strengthen the economic status of the kingdom. Though the capture of Nuwakot by the Gorkha kingdom is understood through geo-strategic importance, geo-economic importance is of great significance.

East-West campaign

After the capture of Kathmandu valley in 1768 A.D., King Prithivi Narayan Shah launched a unification campaign towards *the Chaubisi* states in the west and unified the eastern parts of Nepal, extending the boundary to the Mechi River. In 1775, King Prithivi Narayan Shah passed away, and the unification campaign continued by his successor's regent, Rajendra Laxmi, Bahadur Shah, and Bhimsen Thapa, and extended Nepal's boundary to the Tista River in the east and Kangra fort in the west (Nuru, 2022). It is necessary to analyze the reasons behind the east-west campaigns of Nepal. Nepal launched a unification campaign to establish a bigger, stronger, and economically self-sustaining Nepal kingdom as an unavoidable power in South Asia. The natural boundary of the high Himalayas in the north and the defeat of Nepal by China in 1792 A.D. stopped the campaign towards the north. Similarly, the rise of the East India Company as a key regional power in South Asia constrained Nepal's unification campaign in the southern plain region in the Indian sub-continent. Therefore, the small, weaker hill states along the foothills of the Himalayas in the east and west attracted Nepal to establish greater Nepal. The primary aim of the unification campaign was to preserve the physical identity of Nepal and introduce Nepal as a sovereign, strong, and significant power in regional and world politics.

Monopoly on Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes

Phanindra Nath Chakrabarti (1990) mentions that there was significant trade between India and Central Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The commercial relationship between Russia and Tibet in the late eighteenth century made the British East India Company suspicious. The Nepal-Tibet War of 1792 turned into the Sino-Nepal War after China supported Tibet militarily and forced Nepali troops to leave Tibet. The British East India Company signed a commerce treaty with Nepal to allow British merchants from Nepal to trade to Tibet on the condition of providing arms to Nepal against China (Chakrabarti, 1990). The colonization of India by the British East India Company was directed with economic interest, i.e., to expand its business in South and East Asia. After the establishment as a regional power in South Asia, the British aimed to control Trans-Himalayan route to monopolize the trade between South Asia and Tibet and China (Vajiram Editor, 2025). The Hindustan-Tibet Road was built by Governor General Lord Dalhousie during the British Raj in India in the second half of the nineteenth century, which starts from Ambala and goes to the India-Tibet border via Shimla, and is known as the Silk Route (Sharma, 2025). The wars on the Himalayan fronts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were directed to control Trans Himalayan trade routes and monopolize the trade between central, south, and East Asia.

Nepal monopolized the key route of Trans Himalayan trade during the medieval and early modern period and enjoyed economic and cultural progress with the lucrative taxes collected by the state. Malla Kings of Nepal used to mint and circulate silver coins to Tibet and the coinage problem between Nepal and Tibet during the regent rule of Bahadur Shah led to war between Nepal and Tibet in 1789 A.D. Tibet was defeated by Nepal and forced to sign a five point Treaty of Kerung which fourth point mentions that the trade between Tibet and India should be conducted via Nepal and the routes through Sikkim and Bhutan to be closed (Bhusal, 2015). The fourth point of the Kerung Treaty clearly indicates that Nepal wanted to control all available trade routes in Trans Himalayan trade, though the routes lay beyond her political

suzerainty. In 1776 A.D., Nepal annexed Sikkim and extended its territory to the Testa River, also threatening Bhutan during the territorial expansion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The Himalayas are a crescent-shaped mountain range extending from Namcha Barwa in the east to Nanga Parbat in the west, stretching approximately 2500 km with a width of 150 km - 350 km (Roy & Purohit, 2018). Tibet (An autonomous region of China), India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan are the nations which controls various significant trade routes in Himalayas. No nation has complete control over the Himalayas which has shaped the political and security dynamics of south Asia.

Analyzing the map of the Himalayan ranges from Namcha Barwa to Nanga Parbat, all the trade routes available in the Himalaya, and the east-west territorial expansion of Nepal, it can be assessed that Nepal aimed at monopolizing trans Himalayan trade reaching Namcha Barwa in the east and Nanga Parbat in the west if the move was not checkmated by the British East India Company. Nepal expanded its territory to Kangra fort, securing key passes in the Himalayas and the ancient Silk Route between India and Tibet. Analyzing Nepal's physical expansion towards east and west, and the treaty of Kerung, it can be easily acknowledged that Nepal wanted to have complete control over Trans Himalayan trade by securing all key passes and routes between south and East Asia. The territorial expansion was envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors not only for physical identity but to secure trade routes in Tran Tran-Himalayan trade to promote the economic interest of Nepal. It seems that physical identity and economic identity were moving in parallel during the unification of Nepal.

Extension up to the River Ganges

Nirmal Raj Joshi (2023) states that King Prithivi Narayan Shah considered Nepal as a yam between two stones, explaining the geo-political importance of Nepal. King Prithivi Narayan Shah also suggested adopting a defensive policy instead of an offensive one and recommended maintaining good relations with the Chinese emperor as well as with the English Emperor. King Prithivi also visualized that a war with the English emperor is inevitable and suggested fighting on the crossings of Chure hills, where the enemy can be severely defeated, which will provide an opportunity to collect weapons and ammunition required for five to seven generations. Therefore, Nepal can extend its border up to the Ganges River (Joshi, 2023). The message of King Prithivi Narayan Shah in Divya Upadesh clarifies that he visualized conquering the Ganges plane land to ensure the food security of the hilly nation Nepal and extend the border of Nepal to the Ganges River. Mohan Mainali (2023) presents a letter written by Chandrabir Kunwar to Bhimsen Thapa and Ranadhoj Thapa, in which Chandrabir Kunwar claimed that Nepal could rule the whole Indian subcontinent (Bharatkhand). Chandrabir Kunwar was a low-ranking field commander who fought the Anglo-Nepal war under Bhakti Thapa's command in the battle of Mandala (Mainali, 2023). King Prithivi Narayan Shah's wish to extend the border up to the Ganges River and the understanding of a low-ranking field commander of the Anglo-Nepal war to rule the whole Indian subcontinent prove that King Prithivi and his successors aimed to conquer the plain land up to the river Ganges, then to move forward to conquer the whole subcontinent. It can be assessed that Nepal aimed to monopolize Trans Himalayan trade and secure the economic interest by conquering the whole Himalayan

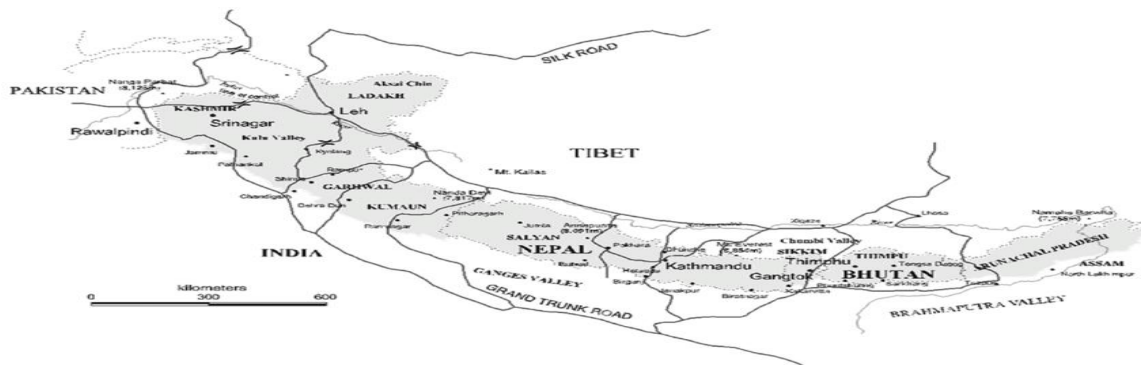
range. After that, Nepal desired to extend its border up to the river Ganges and later to move forward to capture the whole Indian subcontinent. Vast water and other natural resources persisted in the Himalayas, and the existing routes for economic and cultural connectivity of South and East Asia have intensified the importance of the Himalayas. King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors envisioned the geopolitics of the Indian subcontinent as ‘*who commands the Himalayas rules the Indian subcontinent*’.

Map 1: Google satellite image of Himalayas



Source: Roy & Purohit, 2018

Map 2: Trans-Himalaya Trade Routes



Source: Vasudha Pande, 2017

Map 3: Nepal before Anglo-Nepal war



Source: <https://au.pinterest.com/pin/747245763161802706/visual-search>

Preservation of Cultural Identity

King Prithivi Narayan Shah also highlighted the importance of the preservation of cultural identity as a fundamental national interest of Nepal. Nepal is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic nation from its origin. All the people from all castes, cultures, and ethnicities contributed to the unification of Nepal. He considered Nepal a garden of all four castes and thirty-six creeds, and elucidated Nepal as a real Hindustan. He also warned citizens not to give up religion (Joshi, 2023). King Prithivi Narayan Shah expelled the European Christian missionaries from Nepal immediately after capturing the Kathmandu valley (Upreti, 2024). He deeply rooted national unity among the citizens, considering Nepal as a garden of all four castes and thirty-six creeds, and praising the contribution of all citizens in unifying Nepal. The presence of foreign missionaries intangibly challenges national security and interests. It proves that King Prithivi Narayan Shah was very sensitive regarding the preservation of the cultural and religious values of the nation to strengthen the national interest of Nepal.

Influence of King Prithivi Narayan Shah on the Present Policies of Nepal

National objectives are the goals and objectives that are derived from national interests. National interests are permanent, whereas national objectives are dynamic in nature and change according to regional and geopolitical circumstances. According to Karen A. Rasler & William R. Thompson (1994), the political actors are free to choose the courses that are shaped by the history and structures made by their predecessors. The present-day policy makers of Nepal also have choices to set the policies; however, they are guided by the historical framework set by King Prithivi Narayan Shah to a greater extent. The influence of King Prithivi Narayan Shah on present national policies is assessed through Divya Upadesh with three sub-variables of national interests: physical, economic, and cultural identities.

King Prithivi Narayan Shah considered Nepal as a yam between two stones, assessing the geopolitical situation of Nepal, and suggested maintaining good relationships with the northern and southern emperors. Nepal's Foreign Policy 2020 also prioritized relations with immediate neighbors (Acharya, 2023). King Prithivi Narayan Shah suggested avoiding an offensive policy and adopting a defensive policy. He analyzed the terrain of Nepal and suggested doing decisive battle in the crossings of the *Chure* hills. This defense policy, derived from an extensive geopolitical analysis, has a greater impact on the present security policy of Nepal. The military doctrine of Nepal is highly influenced by the defense policy of King Prithivi Narayan Shah. The unification and territorial expansion of King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors were motivated by the physical identity of Nepal. The preservation of physical identity and national security is considered a core value that cannot be compromised in any circumstance. The Constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 5, also accepted the territorial integrity and border security as a fundamental element of national interests.

King Prithivi Narayan Shah attacked Nuwakot to seize the trade route between Kathmandu and Tibet was motivated by economic interest. He also suggested preserving local industries, banning the import of foreign goods, preserving agricultural land, and conducting mine shifting the habitat area to other places from mine areas (Joshi, 2023). Economic well-being and prosperity are also identified as fundamental elements of national interest by the

Constitution. Similarly, Article 50 directive principles (d) policies relating economy, industry, and commerce are directed towards achieving economic well-being. King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors continued the east-west campaign to control Trans-Himalayan trade routes. On 13 Oct 2019, President Xi Jinping, during his state visit to Nepal, said, *“We will develop the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network and help Nepal to realize its dream to transform itself from a landlocked country to a land-linked country”* (Koirala & Dahal, 2019). Nepal’s dream to be a land-linked nation on Trans-Himalayan trade is still an unavoidable national economic interest of Nepal, which is embedded in the historical structures set by King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors.

King Prithivi Narayan Shah considered Nepal a garden of all four castes and thirty-six creeds, and elucidated Nepal as a real Hindustan, highlighting the social, cultural, and religious aspects of the nation. The Constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 3, accepted multicultural, multilingual, multiethnic, and multireligious characteristics of Nepali society, which seems embedded in the policy of the garden of four castes and thirty-six creeds. Article 4 acknowledged Nepal as a secular state. It is assessed that religious identity is found to be less prioritized at present. The fundamental elements of national interest, freedom, sovereignty, nationality, independence, and dignity of Nepal, the rights of the Nepalese people, are included in Article 5 of the Constitution can be categorized as social, cultural, and political interests of Nepal.

The study aimed at exploring explored the national interests and objectives envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah during the unification campaign. The research focuses on identifying the national interests with the use of three sub-variables: physical identity, economic identity, and cultural identity. The study also analyzes the influence of the national objectives envisioned by King Prithivi and his successors on the present policies of Nepal. The study also examined the definition of national interest defined by various scholars to extract the relevant sub-variables. The study supports the idea regarding the elements of national interests introduced by Jock Donnelly (2000), Gordon de Brouwer (2020), Ken Kiyono (1969), and E.W. Colglazier (2021). The study follows the definition of national interest by Hans J. Morgenthau as the survival of the state, especially the protection of physical, political, and cultural identity against encroachment by other states. The study also supports the idea of Gaurav Bhattra (2022) and Surendra Singh Rawal (2022) regarding the security strategies of King Prithivi Narayan Shah during the unification campaign.

According to Laxman B. Hamal (1995), King Prithivi Naraya Shah captured with the employment of all instruments of national power because of the geo-economic and geo-strategic importance of Nuwakot. Similarly, Nuru (2022) explains the effort of the successors of King Prithivi Narayan Shah to extend the eastern border up to the river Tista and the western border up to Kangra. Phanindra Nath Chakrabarti (1990) explains the Trans Himalayan trade between Tibet and the Indian sub-continent, as well as the trade of Tibet with central Asia and Russia. He also mentions Gorkha-Tibet war and the diplomatic effort of British East India Company to gain access in trans Himalayan trade during Sino-Nepal war of 1792 A.D. Supporting the idea of P.N. Chakrabarti (1990) and Sanjay Sharma (2025), the study also proves that the wars on Himalayan fronts in eighteenth and nineteenth century was directed to

control trans Himalayan trade routes and monopolize the trade between central, south and east Asia.

Roy & Purohit (2018) explain the geography of the Himalayas, and Vasudha Pande (2017) states that trade routes exist in the Himalayas. After the victory over Tibet in 1789 A.D., Nepal forced Tibet to sign the Kerung Treaty, forcing Tibet to trade with India via Nepal only and to close the route of Sikkim and Bhutan. The study examines the economic interest of Nepal in launching its campaign along the east and west. The idea presented by Roy & Purohit (2018) and Vasudha Pande (2017) regarding the availability of trans Himalayan trade routes is examined with reference to Nepal's unification campaign towards east and west. The study tries to analyze Nepal's physical expansion towards east and west and the treaty of Kerung, and it proves that Nepal wanted to have complete control over Trans Himalayan trade by securing all key passes and routes between south and East Asia. The study finds that physical identity and economic identity were moving in parallel during the unification of Nepal. At the present no nation completely controls the Himalayas and trans-Himalayan trade. India is a regional power who controls larger areas in Himalayas; however, India is challenged by Pakistan in the western Himalayan frontier occupying half of Kashmir. The CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) runs through Himalayas has undermined Indian regional hegemony and changed the political and security dynamics of Indian sub-continent. Nepal covers significant trans-Himalayan passes at the central Himalayas. China is an unavoidable actor in Himalayas which controls the northern portion and border with all nations of Himalayas. There is no monopoly of single power in Himalayas. The research states, 'who commands the Himalayas that rules the Indian subcontinent,' highlighting the importance of the Himalayas.

The study has identified the desire of King Prithivi Narayan Shah to conquer plain agricultural land and extend the border up to the river Ganges. Similarly, the study explores the understanding of a low-ranking field commander to rule the whole Indian sub-continent (*Bharatkhand*), referencing the letter presented by Mohan Mainali (2023). The key finding of the study is that King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors envisioned conquering the Himalayas and extending the border up to the river Ganges. The study also supports the idea of Koirala and Dahal (2019) regarding Nepal's desire to transform a land-linked nation that is deeply rooted in the historical framework of Nepal. The national objectives and interests envisaged by King Prithivi Narayan Shah have a great influence on the present policies of Nepal. The constitution of Nepal 2015 also incorporates the fundamental elements of national interests and prioritizes physical identity, economic well-being, and socio-cultural identity, which are aligned with the national interests envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah. However, the religious identity is shadowed and less prioritized in the present policies.

Conclusion

The national objectives of the state should be the preservation of physical, political, and cultural identity, which are equated to the protection of territorial integrity, the existing politico-economic system, and ethnic, religious, and linguistic norms of the state, respectively. King Prithivi Narayan Shah set the vision of territorial integrity with the aim of controlling major trade routes in Himalayas for the economic security of the nation. The successors of King

Prithivi Narayan also followed the vision and continued territorial expansion towards east and west with the aim of monopolizing trans-Himalayan trade routes. The trans-Himalayan trade was also highly prioritized during Rana regime and the present rulers also envisaged Nepal as land linked nation instead landlocked. The study also examined the definition of national interest defined by various scholars to extract the relevant sub-variables. The study proves that the wars on the Himalayan fronts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were directed to control Trans Himalayan trade routes and monopolize the trade between central, south, and East Asia. The study successfully presents the idea '*who commands the Himalayas that rules the Indian subcontinent*', highlighting the importance of the Himalayas. At the present, no single power controls the Himalayas which means no power dominates south Asia unilaterally. Though, India is a regional power in Indian sub-continent it lacks the control of western portion of Himalayas. Pakistan has controlled the western portion of Himalayas including half Kashmir; is a serious challenge to maintain monopoly in Himalayas. Similarly, the geopolitical location of Nepal at the central Himalayas and China as a key actor of Himalayas has provided multifaceted challenges for the complete control of Himalayas. The key finding of the study is that King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors envisioned the conquest of the Himalayas and extending the border up to the river Ganges. King Prithivi Narayan Shah also highlighted the importance of the preservation of cultural identity as a fundamental national interest of Nepal, understanding the multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic characteristics of Nepal. The national cultural vision envisaged by King Prithivi Narayan Shah has deep influence on the present constitution of Nepal 2015. Similarly, Nepal adopts defensive security policy which has been continuing throughout the history considering the geopolitical importance of Nepal and the powerful rivalries. The study clearly identifies the national interests and objectives envisioned by King Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors influence the present national political, economic, military and cultural policies of Nepal.

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