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Realist and Liberal Perspectives : A Critical Analysis of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in Nepal

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Abstract

Drawing from the theoretical perspectives of realism and liberalism in international relations, this paper has critically examined how the complex dimensions interface and influence with each other, and impact Nepal's national interests, security concerns, and democratic processes. The MCC compact signed between the United State of America and Nepal is an avenue for development assistance, has analyzed through the lens of national interest and state behaviour. Realism underscores the significance of power dynamics and security considerations, prompting questions about hidden agendas and potential compromises to Nepal's sovereignty. In contrast, liberalism emphasizes cooperative endeavors, framing the MCC as an opportunity for economic growth and international cooperation. The changing global security paradigm reflects a complex landscape of non-traditional security threats, regional power shifts, and interconnected vulnerabilities. In this context role of media has emerged as a key mediator in shaping public perception and influencing decision-making. Security implications encompass both theoretical perspectives. Realism emphasizes the authoritative of securing national interests in the face of external influences, urging Nepal to balance developmental partnerships by safeguarding sovereignty. Liberals advocate for collaboration, seeing initiatives like the MCC as pathways to economic stability and cooperative security mechanisms, bolstering the country's overall security. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of a holistic approach in understanding the MCC, the changing global security paradigm, media dynamics, and security implications in Nepal.

Keywords

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), Realism, Liberalism, Changing Global Security Paradigm, National Security, Media.

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1. Introduction

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact is being studied from a variety of theoretical angles that take into account American national interests, the changing nature of the international security environment, and its implications for Nepal. This analysis is especially pertinent in the context of a democratically growing country like Nepal, where it is possible to explore the potential impact of domestic media on international agreements with security consequences.

Primarily, the MCC compact, conceived by the United States in 2004, aimed to better global poverty and promote development through collaborative partnerships. This initiative has since been adopted by over 51 nations, yielding divergent outcomes—some instances of success and others marked by challenges and disagreements, thus interpreting the project both argumentative and undisputable. Additionally, the post-9/11 era, when the United States revised its security posture, is when the MCC concept first emerged. The MCC can be seen in this context as an instrument that developed within the confines of this changing security paradigm. Due to its connections to current international security issues, an analysis that places the MCC in the perspective of contemporary conceptions of international relations and diplomacy is necessary.

The MCC compact is now formally implemented in Nepal. The Government of Nepal and MCC officially launched the Nepal Compact Program on 30th August 2023. The compact outlines the general terms under which MCC will provide assistance of up to US\$ 500 million to the Government of Nepal, with the government contributing up to US\$ 130 million for a poverty-reduction program through economic growth in Nepal (MCA Nepal, 2017). However, the Government of Nepal has allocated an additional US\$ 67 million for the implementation of the transmission line under the MCC compact. In 2019, Nepal and MCC entered into a program implementation

agreement. Consequently, there are two significant agreements related to MCC: the first being the MCC agreement, often referred to as the compact, and the second being the implementation agreement, also known as the program implementation agreement. There was a lot of discussion both in favor of and against it during the time. The MCC project and potential threats to Nepal's national security are still up for debate.

The partnership-driven MCC compact authorizations exploration from several theoretical standpoints. *Firstly*, an assessment from the vantage point of America's national interests underscores the diplomatic and economic motives underlying its outreach. *Secondly*, considering the shifting global security landscape, the MCC's emergence as a strategic response gains prominence, necessitating an evaluation through lenses such as realism/neo-realism and liberalism/neo-liberalism. The scholar Emma Mawdsley has explained clearly about philosophical perspectives of the MCC, neo-liberalism, poverty and security in the article published in *Review of International Political Economy* in 2007. The writer states:

“While radical and mainstream critics disagree very significantly on the extent, the exact causes and the appropriate responses to the uneven and contradictory outcomes of neoliberal globalization, there is at least a greater or lesser acknowledgement of its negative face—something that is singularly missing from both the 2002 National Security Strategy and the Millennium Challenge Account. Both set out a grossly inept understanding of the relationships between poverty, economic growth and security” (p. 502).

In Nepal's context, a democratic, developing nation, the implementation of the MCC carries multifaceted implications. The examination of its effects should encompass not only its developmental impact but also the intricate interplay between bilateral security compacts and the domestic media landscape. The latter is instrumental in shaping public perception and policy discourse, and its role in mediating discussions on the MCC's security aspects merits critical review from the theories of agenda setting and framing the framework.

The bilateral agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a United States

entity, presents a captivating avenue for examination and analysis within the framework of security approaches in International Relations. Particularly noteworthy is the exploration of the pivotal role played by media in the context of a bilateral accord and its intersection with national security concerns. The intricate dynamics of how domestic media wield the potential to influence bilateral relations and international diplomacy offer a fascinating dimension for investigation. The media's effect on national security mostly relates to the globalization/neo-liberalism. Press freedom is obvious in neo-liberalism. Globalization does not affect the national security of all states equally. States in stable regions appear to have embraced the changes rendered by globalization the most, states in regions of enduring rivalries the least. Although the weak and failed states also show signs of having been affected by globalization, many of the "symptoms" they manifest have more to do with internal difficulties than external challenges (Ripsman & Paul, 2005).

Foremost, it endeavors to decipher the extent to which domestic media outlets wield influence over the narrative surrounding the Nepal-MCC Compact. By scrutinizing the content, tone, and framing of media coverage, the research aims to unearth patterns that elucidate how media activities have potentially framed the discourse, public perception, and policy deliberations concerning the bilateral agreement and its security ramifications.

2. Statement of Problem

The relationship among the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the changing global security paradigm, media dynamics, and their implications within Nepal creates a confluence of perspectives that raises questions about the most suitable theoretical framework within international relations to explain this complex relationship. While a multitude of theoretical paradigms within international relations can be applied to analyze this convergence, the challenge lies in defining the most logical and contextually relevant approach for comprehensive understanding.

Within the presentation of theoretical lenses available, the selection of an appropriate framework is imperative to ensure insightful analysis. Therefore, a critical examination is necessary to establish which theoretical perspective aligns most clearly with the complex dynamics of the MCC, changing global security paradigms,

domestic media influence, and the ramifications relevant to a nation like Nepal. This assessment is essential to disentangle the complicated web of factors underlying bilateral partnerships, evolving security dynamics, and the interests of smaller nations, particularly when facilitated by the influence of domestic media outlets.

In the context of Nepal regarding the MCC compact anti-American sentiment also has been seen as a domestic media effect. Media mostly cover the news related to negativity as it is said that bad news is good news for journalism. Moreover by setting the agenda or making the opinion the national or regional media become biased for their nation or region. The same thing has been happening in Arab. Many have attributed anti-American sentiment within Arab countries to a highly negative information environment propagated by transnational Arab satellite TV news channels such as Al-Jazeera. The scholar E.C. Nisbet argues that the Al-Jazeera of Al-Arabia, they have been influencing the public and creating the opinion for the people. Comparing both media the authors argues, “Those who are more likely to disfavor the United States select Al-Jazeera as their news source and those who are less likely to disfavor the United States select Al-Arabiya” (Nisbet, 2011). It means that in the neo-liberal world, media are the powerful whether they are in domestic, regional or in global level. The role of the media is very significant even in small or powerful state.

It is crucial to acknowledge that while the confluence of MCC, changing global security paradigms, media, and their implications has not generated any entirely new theoretical constructs or definitive conclusions based on pre-existing theories, it would be remiss to assert that this field remains void of scholarly inquiry. Various substantial studies have contributed valuable insights, forming the foundation upon which new research activities can be built. The prior scholarship forms a foundation from which a fresh study can be boarded upon, refining and extending our understanding of the complex dynamics that define this complex domain.

As I explained above, there is a wide range of studies on the role of domestic media in international relations. However, there is still lacking research on the “domestic media effect, national security concern and international relations”. Moreover, there is still limited research to seek interconnection to MCC compact, National security

and realist perspective as well as the role of media and liberal perspective of international relations.

3. Methodology

Research on “Realist and Liberal Perspectives: A Critical Analysis of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in Nepal” has discussed, and analyzed within the realist and liberalist perspectives. Qualitative method is applied in the research following the ontological and epistemological lens. In the methodological approach, interpretivism has adapted to proceed with the research. As Max Weber (1864-1920) suggests that in the human sciences, we are concerned with understanding in comparison to process rather than facts. Interpretive methods employ an inductive approach that starts with data and tries to derive a theory about the phenomenon of interest from the observed data (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The interpretive approach is the systemic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in their natural setting in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds (Neuman, 2020). Following this methodological approach I have analyzed and explained the MCC through the theoretical lens of International Relations.

4. Examining the Case of Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in Nepal: Insights from Various Theoretical Frameworks

4.1 Realism vs. Liberalism

National security, sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and economic well-being are the National interest of every state, the major areas of international relations. The prominent scholars of realism Thucydides, Max Weber, E. H. Carr, and Hans J. Morgenthau have explained systematically in their writings about statism, political supremacy and power exercise and security concern in international relations. In the six principles of classical realism of Morgenthau (2017), power or interest is the central concept of his political realism that makes politics an autonomous discipline. He emphasizes that international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. According to Morgenthau, the main actors in international politics are states, which are moved in pursuit of their own national

interests, concerned with their own security, and struggle for power. Morgenthau's political realism is the concept of power or "of interest defined in terms of power, the assumption that political leaders think and act in terms of interest defined as power" (Morgenthau, 2017 : 20). Various things can be associated with interest or power at different times and circumstances (Morgenthau, 2017 : 23). By refereeing Max Weber's observation that "Interests (material and ideal), not ideas, dominate directly the actions of men.....", Morgenthau, (2017 : 23) wants to show how interest determines political action concerning with the own security in international/ domestic politics. But the neo-realist (structuralism) has a different thought. States are less important because structures compel them to act in certain ways (Waltz, 1979). The author of "Realism, Neo-realism and American Liberalism" K. L. Simko states that even the liberalist state America has the domination of neo-realism in international relations. We can see that the emergence and popularity of neo-realism as a significantly modified version of, or alternative to, classical realism has gone a long way toward reconciling a realist approach to international politics with the enduring liberal tradition in America (Shimko, 1992). The author is not compelling to follow the classical realism what Morgenthau insists. He advises, "American students of international relations can be realists without shedding their liberal predisposition". It means the after the 1990s till date the national interest of USA in international relations can be also explained from the neo-liberalist perspectives. Iraq War, Afghanistan War, Saria War, Libya War and so many conflict caused by the USA and now the NATO, IPS, SSP and MCC can be explained the instrument of the neo-liberalist approach in international relations.

In international relations, the liberal perspective is different from the realist perspective. John Lock, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, Stanley Hoffman, Michael W. Doyle are prominent scholar of liberalism. The focus of liberalism has been on freedom, cooperation, peace and progress. Kant says, "Establishment of constitutional and mutually respectful states could easily lead to perpetual peace and progress". Ewan Harrison the writer of, "Waltz, Kant and Systematic Approaches to International Relations" try to compare the theoretical perspectives of Aaltz and Kant both:

"Although Waltz and Kant agree that a systemic approach is needed to conceptualize international relations, they reach

very different conclusions about the nature of the international system. Waltz stresses the need for the construction of a logically rigorous model of international politics, and others too have extolled the virtues of his 'logically coherent' analysis. However, Kant's thought provides strong reasons to question the logical validity of Waltz's model. In turn this has helped to identify the distinctiveness of Kant's views on systemic approaches, and the unique place Kant's attempt to delineate a political science of international relations has in the history of political thought" (p. 162).

Furthermore, the scholar Stanley Hoffman speaks, "The essence of liberalism is self-restraint, moderation, compromise and peace". Scholar Michael W. Doyle states:

"There is no canonical description of liberalism. What we tend to call liberal resembles a family portrait of principles and institutions, recognizable by certain characteristics-for example, individual freedom, political participation, private property, and equality of opportunity- that most liberal states share, although none has perfected them all" (Doyle, 1986).

Explaining about the theoretical perspective of the liberalism it might be taken as the enemy of the nationalism. But the reality is different seen the defeat of fascist in the Second World War. World War II, postwar liberalism sought to safeguard and freedom by de-emphasizing the political claims of the state and the international human rights movement, sponsored encouraged by the United Nations, clearly reflected this (Rabkin, 1997). He further adds, "It was premised on the assumption that international cooperation could guarantee individual rights more securely old system of nation-states, jealously guarding their sovereign powers".

The scholars Johan Eriksson and Giampiero Giacomello note in their article, "The Information Revolution, Security and International Relations: (I.R.) relevant Theory", "Liberalism grasps many of the elements of security in the digital age: the multiplicity of non-state actors with transnational capacity, network economies, vulnerability interdependence", and the consequent perforation of formally sovereign boundaries (Eriksson & Fiacomello, 2006)". Scholar Duncan Bell has interpreted liberalism differently. He states:

“Self-declared liberals have supported extensive welfare states and their abolition; the imperial civilizing mission and its passionate denunciation; the necessity of social justice and its outright rejection; the perpetuation of the sovereign state and its transcendence; massive global redistribution of wealth and the radical inequalities of the existing order” (Bell, 2014).

The recent world is in the domination of neo-liberalism. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye have been considered the founders of the neoliberal school of thought. “MCC, Changing Global Security Paradigm, Media and Security Implication in Nepal” can be the study of both theoretical perspective realism and liberalism.

4.2 National Security

National security is a fundamental and important concept within the realm of international relations. It encompasses the strategies, policies, and measures that sovereign states undertake to safeguard their citizens, territory, values, and interests from external threats. National security is a paramount concern for states as they navigate the complexities of the international system, and it has significant implications for both domestic and global affairs. Key aspects of national security in international relations include threats and challenges, defense and military preparedness, diplomacy and alliances, economic security, homeland security, information and cyber security, human security and more. Even the super power of the world always has threat of national security. Scholar David A. Baldwin states:

“When states are described as ‘competing’ with one another for security, such a conception seems to be implied. This suggests that the ‘winner’ of such a competition could be a state surrounded by insecure states. The question of whether insecure neighbors are good neighbors, however, should be carefully considered” (p. 22).

National security is always the main priority of any state. The distinctive meaning of national security means freedom from foreign dictation (Lasswell, 1950). Neo-realist scholar Kenneth Waltz in his book “Theory of International Politics states, “Anarchy is the permissive cause of war. It is not a sufficient cause. Security competition occurs in a condition of anarchy”(Waltz, 1979). Definitely national security means not only the security of the

territory but also the security of the people and their life liberty and happiness. National security is about providing citizens with freedom from want and fear and is best seen as a condition of sustainable freedom (Buzan, 1991). The realist scholar John Mearsheimer has interpreted differently. He stated, “National security means being able to preserve political autonomy and ensure survival despite the intentions and capabilities of other states”. (Mearsheimer, 2001). The interpretation and arguments of different theories and scholars are different to each other’s. Joseph Nye, the scholar of Neo- liberalism says that National security is no longer a zero-sum game. An attempt by one country to dominate others will be met with resistance (Nye, 1990).

National Security became vital again for U.S. Scholars Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, in the book “The Evolution of the International Security Studies” (2009), explain about the significance of national security for the U.S. More specifically, the authors in chapter eight explained “Responding to 9/11: a return to National Security” linking with the ISS.

“In a general sense, we use 9/11 as a temporal benchmark in the same way as we used the ending of the Cold War. In a more specific sense, we ask whether 9/11 and the subsequent unfolding ‘Global War on Terrorism’ (GWOt) have been taken as an ‘event’ of sufficient importance to reshape the agenda of ISS in some ways” (p. 226).

After the 9/11, the perception of USA has been changed in terms of national and global security which can be seen in there security strategies after 2002. Scholar Anton Grizold in his writing, “the concept of national security in contemporary world” argues the step to be taken by the international community in terms of inclusive and democratic international security order. He adds:

“We are in the era of a new “turning point” in the process of “reforming” the structure of the international community and of (re)shaping the mechanisms for ensuring national and international security, which should -in contrast to the past, in which the logic of ideological and geopolitical globalism of two continuously antagonistic super powers prevailed-to a greater extent be geared towards the assertion of some of the common interests and common security of all the members of the international community. Otherwise, the structure of the

international community will again be “reshaped” merely in line with the interests of a smaller group of modern states, with the USA being at the forefront” (p. 52).

These statements from prominent scholars provide diverse perspectives on the concept of national security within the context of MCC compact and its implication in Nepal. As the scholars underscore the multi-dimensional nature of national security, ranging from survival and protection to economic wellbeing and the pursuit of freedom, MCC is being the debatable and major issues from the national security concerns.

4.3 Changing Global Security Paradigm

The changing global security paradigm refers to the evolving nature of security challenges, threats, and strategies in the context of international relations. It signifies the transformation in the way states and international actors perceive, respond to, and address security concerns due to shifts in the geopolitical landscape, technological advancements, socio-economic changes, and other factors. This paradigm shift has profound implications for how states conceptualize and manage security on a global scale. It remains possible that sustained globalization will eventually reshape national security establishments in line with the globalization school’s expectations (Ripsman & Paul, 2005). Several key factors contribute to the changing global security paradigm. Rising great power competition, Nuclear Proliferation, Non-State Actors, Cyber security and Technology, Interconnectedness and Inter-dependence, Regional Instabilities, Human security.

Mary Kaldor, a prominent scholar in security studies, has emphasized the shift from traditional state-centric security to the concept of “new wars”. She argues that contemporary conflicts are characterized by non-state actors, global networks, and a complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors. Kaldor’s work highlights the need to understand security challenges beyond the lens of conventional military threats.

Thomas G. Weiss, in his exploration of the post-Cold War security environment, emphasizes the importance of human security. He argues that the changing global security paradigm requires addressing issues such as poverty, health, and environmental concerns to ensure the well-being and rights of individuals, moving beyond state-centric perspectives.

Barry Buzan's writings on security studies highlight the concept of "securitization", where various issues are framed as security concerns. He notes that the traditional distinction between national security and other security domains (such as economic security or environmental security) is becoming blurred, leading to a broader understanding of what constitutes a security threat.

These scholars' perspectives reflect the evolving nature of security studies and the need to adapt to the changing global security paradigm. Their work underscores the importance of considering a wide range of issues, actors, and dynamics when analyzing contemporary security challenges in international relations. So homeland security and international security is the main concern of the U.S., and the consequences are the NATO, IPS, QUAD and AUKUS. And it is argued that MCC is the part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS).

Author Xiaodi Ye's article, "Explaining Chania's hedging to the United States, Indo Pacific Strategy" analyzes how and why the United States, Japan, Australia, and India have promoted the Indo-Pacific concept and how this concept has imposed strategic pressure on China's national security. However, China's changing and complex attitudes and strategic responses to the Indo-Pacific concept have largely been overlooked and the United States, the unipolar hegemon, China can elevate its strategic partnership with Russia to resist America's hegemonic position (Ye, 2020).

This is the digital and virtual world, the world of media and the interdependence. Security issues cannot be defined by one theoretical perspectives in this era. The information technology has brought the revolution and the global security also has been changing accordingly. I agree with the scholars John Eriksson and Giampiero Giacomello who argue about the pragmatism and empiricism on their writing, "The information revolution, security and international relations". They explain about the duality in theories and application understanding about the security:

"The foregoing analysis has shown that there are two interrelated problems in past efforts at understanding security in the digital age. First, theory and practice on this matter are so distant that they hardly ever inform each other. Second, existing IR theories are plagued by an entrenched dualism, implying great difficulties for theoretical adaptation and

application in analyses of the complexities of the emerging new digital world” (p. 237).

Definitely information revolution has brought significant changes in multiple level and sectors all over the world. Therefore the global security paradigm also has been changing with adopting the different dimensions.

4.4 MCC and Bilateralism

Especially since the events of 2001, the United States has made further changes and modifications to its international relations and National Security Strategy. Until poverty alleviation and economic prosperity are achieved in the world’s poorest and developing countries, terrorism will continue to grow and the challenge to its security and sovereignty will continue to grow. Embracing this reality, the United States has adopted a strategy and program of partnership in poverty alleviation and economic prosperity in the world’s poorest and developing countries. As a result, the concept of MCC was exposed.

“For the democratization and development objectives with the implementation of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) program. The MCA began implementation in 2004, and subsequently the State Department utilized those effectiveness measures developed for the MCA program to assess progress towards the democratization and development objectives described in the 2002 NSS” (Stolberg, 2012).

The USA has been taking it as very important tools to enhance its national and global security in the appearance of poverty elevation and economic growth of poor and developing state with bilateral partnership. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is a valuable U.S. development tool that could reach its full potential if protected from Washington’s emphasis on short-term political victories (Hewko, 2010).

Bilateralism is an essential component of international relations, allowing states to pursue their interests and address specific issues with greater efficiency and flexibility (Keohane, 1984). Bilateral relationships can encompass a wide range of areas, including diplomacy, trade, security, culture, environment, and more. Key features and aspects of bilateralism in international relations include Negotiations and Agreements, Direct Communi-

cation, Flexibility, Confidentiality, Trust-building, Speed and Efficiency, Issue-specific Focus, Conflict Resolution, Enhanced Collaboration, Power Dynamics, Trade and Economic Relations, Diplomacy and Geopolitics. Bilateralism plays a crucial role in shaping state interactions, allowing countries to negotiate and build trust on a more personal level, while also serving as building blocks for broader multilateral cooperation (Nye, 2004).

In this context, my research deals with three major theoretical concepts: Bilateralism, the Media effect and Security Implications. The term “Bilateralism” in my study deals with the Compact between Nepal’s Government and MCC, the United States of America. Bilateralism is the conduct of political, economic, or cultural relations between two sovereign states. Generally, states with bilateral ties and relationships exchange diplomatic agents such as ambassadors to facilitate dialogues and cooperation (Thompson, 2013). Utilizing the concept of bilateralism, I aim to explore not only the political and economic relations concerning the compact but also the concealed security concern of the U.S. through the MCC.

4.5 Media Effects

Discussing about the international or global media, they do not have the priority for the small state like Nepal. They have always concern about the hegemon state and international issues. Writer John Miklian has done the research on International media’s role on U.S. - Small state relation: The case study of Nepal in 2008. He argues that the international media are not biases and careless about the issues and interest of small states. Mentioning the incidents of insurgencies period in Nepal he states:

“International journalists contribute to misguided U.S.-small state relations by encouraging simplifications and misrepresentations of both the conflict in general and the CPN/M in particular. In addition, improper framing of the conflict and abuse of the relationship between international journalists and their domestic counterparts exacerbated the difficulty of presentation of both factual, and more importantly, complete information” (p. 415).

Therefore, in this study the role of the domestic media has focused and explained how domestic media has effected in national interest and the international relations. There are several scholars

explained about media effect from theoretical perspectives. PM Valkenburg, Jochen Peter, Joseph B. Walther, DA Scheufele, W. Russell Neuman & Lauren Guggenheim are the prominent scholars of media effect theory. The media effect is also directly connected with international relations and security implications. The role of global and domestic media is very significant in international relations. Especially when making important security concerns between states, not only the governments (actors) but also the civil society, media, people and other stakeholders have to be considered. The Author Tsvetelina Yordanova, in her article “Media-International Relations Interaction Model”, mention that among researchers mostly convinced in the powerful media effects is Bernard Cohen, whose famous quote says that “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about”. In a country with a democratic system, the influence of civil society and the media is very effective.

All the nations-state use media as a tool to enhance the national interest. It is a part of public diplomacy as well. The international relation of a state differs in its proper use of media. Agenda setting, framing public opinion, being a watchdog/pressure group and the strong tolls of the state is the significance of media in international relations and national security. Media communicate, interpret and advocate the issues to the audience. Media influence the national security of a country in agenda-setting. If the media continuously raises any question regarding other countries, that becomes the agenda. Create/framing a public opinion; the public’s primary source of information is the media. After listening/watching/reading the news/information from the media, public makes an opinion on issues. In addition, media can give pressure to the government and the stakeholder to take or not to take the decision regarding international relations and national security. But sometimes, media are a strong tool for the state where the government can use media for the national interest. If the government is in a dilemma to make a direct decision or cannot express through it actor, then media can be used as a solid means or tool to enhance the national interest.

The effect of media always derived by the political situation and stability of the state. If there are differences among policymakers on a particular policy, the news would report conflicting views. But if

policymakers are in agreement, journalists too would fall in line (Shahin, 2023).

In the recent world, the paradigm has been shifting in terms of electronic, online and social media. Mainstream traditional media are being dominated by the online and social media. All these media are now on the hand of citizen and citizen journalism is not in the control of ethic and law of a state. The risk and challenges of fake news has effects the accountability, balance and the credibility of news and media. Chris J Vargo University of Colorado Boulder, USA, Lei Guo and Michelle A Amazeen Boston University, USA in their article “The agenda setting power of fake news: A big data analysis of the online media landscape from 2014-2016” states “Emerging media, which is also online-only, appears to be responsive to the agendas of fake news, as well and taken all together, online partisan and nonpartisan media were closely intertwined with fake news websites, producing an extremely complicated and uncertain online media scape” (Vaagro, Geo & Amazeen, 2017). They have also shown the picture of the sponsorship in news and media regarding the agenda setting:

“If I take a full-page ad in the New York Times to publicize a project, it might cost \$40,000, and in any case, people tend to be skeptical about advertising. But if the New York Times writes even a moderately positive one-column story about one of my deals, it doesn’t cost me anything, and it’s worth a lot more than \$40,000....the point is that we got a lot of attention, and that alone creates value” (p. 18).

As explained above, there are several fake news, agenda setting and creating public opinion regarding the MCC compact in traditional and new media in Nepal. Therefore the media operating from domestic has not only affected to the domestic audience but also in international arena. There is a wide range of studies on the role of media in international relations. Moreover, there is still limited research to seek interconnection to the MCC compact, National security and realist perspective, as well as the role of media and liberal perspective of international relations.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Realism and liberalism are two prominent theories in international relations that offer different perspectives on how states

interact, pursue national interests, and ensure national security. When examining the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) project, its relation to national interest, national security, the role of domestic media, and its implications in Nepal, the two theories provide distinct insights.

Realism emphasizes the anarchic nature of the international system and the primacy of state interests and security. In the context of the MCC project and Nepal, realism suggests that states prioritize their survival and self-interest. For Nepal, participation in the MCC project could be driven by the pursuit of economic development, but realists would emphasize the need to assess the project's potential impact on Nepal's security and sovereignty. Questions might arise about hidden agendas, influence from more powerful actors, and long-term consequences. Realism underscores the importance of national security. Nepal would likely consider the potential security implications of participating in the MCC project. Realists might argue that accepting foreign assistance should not compromise national security or sovereignty, especially in a geopolitically sensitive region like South Asia. From a realist perspective, domestic media's role might be seen as influencing public perception, shaping opinions on how the MCC project aligns with national interest, and highlighting any potential security concerns. Realists would emphasize that states often use media to advance their strategic interests, which might involve highlighting national security implications.

Liberalism emphasizes cooperation, international institutions, and the potential for shared norms and values. In the context of the MCC project and Nepal, liberals acknowledge that national interests can include economic prosperity, development, and cooperation. Nepal's involvement in the MCC project could be viewed as a liberal pursuit of economic growth and poverty reduction. Liberals might argue that open dialogue with stakeholders and international cooperation can align with Nepal's national interest. Liberals recognize that national security extends beyond military concerns to include economic stability and cooperation. They might contend that the MCC project, if implemented transparently and with international oversight, could enhance Nepal's economic security without necessarily compromising its sovereignty. Liberal perspective emphasize the media's role in fostering transparency, accountability, and public debate. They might view the domestic

media's effect as positive if it encourages open discussions about the MCC project's benefits, drawbacks, and potential security implications, thus promoting a participatory democratic process.

This study illustrates how different perspectives on international relations theories view state behaviour, national interest, security, and the function of domestic media in relation to global initiatives like the MCC in a developing democracy like Nepal. These viewpoints provide insightful information that can guide Nepal's decision-making, media coverage, and participation in international relations.

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