Nepal's Geopolitical Sensitivity on Great Power Rivalry: Analysing through the Lens of Schizoanalysis

Bidhur Dhakal[1][*]
Nazir Muhammad[2]
Suloza Khadka[3]

[1]East China Normal University (Shanghai, China), dhbidhur@outlook.com
[2]East China Normal University (Shanghai, China), nazirmuhammad12@gmail.com
[3] Fudan University (Shanghai, China), suloza.khadka@gmail.com
*Corresponding author: dhbidhur@outlook.com
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8373-8737

ABSTRACT

Nepal, positioned strategically between China and India, faces unique security and foreign policy challenges as a buffer state amidst great power rivalries. This article employs Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's schizoanalysis framework to analyze Nepal's security dynamics and foreign policy evolution. Concepts such as deterritorialization, reterritorialization, molecular and molar lines, and machines of desire are applied to explore the interplay of domestic and international factors influencing Nepal's geopolitical strategy. The study highlights Nepal's historical balancing act between India and China, the impact of political transformations since 1990, and the growing influence of global powers like the US and EU. It also addresses the structural vulnerabilities and opportunities posed by these dynamics, focusing on Nepal's aspirations for sovereignty, economic development, and geopolitical stability. By integrating schizoanalysis into the study of international relations, the article provides a novel perspective on how smaller states navigate great power competition, emphasizing Nepal's nuanced approach to diplomacy and security.

ARTICLE HISTORY

HOW TO CITE?

1. Introduction.

Between China and India, two nuclear-armed countries with a history of border tensions, Nepal serves as a natural buffer zone. Because of its advantageous location, it can act as a mediator and uphold regional peace. On the other hand, its significant geographical location has renewed the challenges of being a strategic battlefield for extraordinary power rivalry.

Driven by its impressive economic expansion, China has become a significant force on the world stage, upending the US's long-standing hegemony (Park, 2023). By utilizing its economic might, China has strategically pushed its interests globally and in the Indo-Pacific region. In this scenario, the US's comprehensive engagement policy of the 1990s toward China (Montaperto, 1995) has been changed towards complete containment, aiming to maintain American leadership and stifle China's influence (Anh, 2019). This policy shift from comprehensive engagement to complete containment, since the Trump Administration, the US has redefined its alliance and partnership to counterbalance the Chinese influence in the region (Borisov & Tarkhina, 2022). Assuring allies and stifling China's influence are containment goals in Asia, where a US-backed neo-containment architecture is expected to center around India (Kelly, 2010).

The Indo-China border dispute, the Ukraine crisis, the US involvement and Sino-Indian silence, the Sino-US trade war, the Taiwan crisis, the strong cooperation between China and Pakistan, the multifaceted Indo-US strategic partnership, which includes the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) and Quad Security Dialogue (Quad), the collaboration between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS), and the EU's de-risking policy toward China are all events occurring on the periphery of Nepal (Baniya, 2023). On the other hand, along with BRI, with the goals of promoting global governance, security, and development, China has launched the Global Security Initiative (GSI), Global Development Initiative (GDI), and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) since 2022. These initiatives aim to strengthen the Chinese Communist Party's domestic legitimacy, reform the global governance system, increase China's international influence – particularly in developing nations – and challenge American conceptions of the liberal rules-based international order (Haenle & Sher, 2023).

The trend of great countries engaging in strategic competition on Nepal's perimeter has increased security vulnerabilities. In this setting, Nepal faces a challenge in striking a balance between reaping the benefits of the triangular rivalry between the US, India, and China both within and outside of its borders (Singh & Shekhar, 2023) and dealing with a complex disorder whose origins are multifaceted, as evidenced by its foreign policy. This complex disorder with multifactorial causes, which can be taken as Schizophrenia (McCutcheon et al., 2020), contributes to long-term disability and poor functional outcomes (Correll & Schooler, 2020). The schizoanalysis of Deleuze and Guattari aids in comprehending the intricate connections between the rivalry between major powers and Nepal's security vulnerability. Schizoanalysis shows how sovereignty and the territorial state have a dynamic, emotive relationship that can redefine global politics and advance emancipatory international relations studies(Gammon, 2010).

Nepal has traditionally been an Indian sphere of influence. Nepal's security, autonomy, and integrity rely on India and China maintaining cordial relations, and broadening its diplomatic ties has mitigated the perception that it is a mere replica of New Delhi's foreign policy (Kozicki, 1969). However, another neighboring country, China, and the US-led Western powers are also trying to expand their influence here through investment and engagement. There is a greater chance of war when unipolarity gives way to bipolarity or multipolarity (Wohlforth, 2009). This article will analyze this fear psychosis and this security dynamics through the lens of schizoanalysis. The framework proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari is a radical approach to examining the flows, fractures, and lines within social and political configurations (Biddle, 2010). This multimodal approach provides a new perspective on intricate social processes beyond conventional discourse and psychoanalytic techniques (Ringrose, 2011). No clear literature explicitly links the idea of schizoanalysis in the context of security – from the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – to conventional ideas of security. Schizoanalysis highlights the productive role of desire in society, a concept that can be used to comprehend security system control and monitoring procedures. According to Deleuze and Guattari's theory, desire directly affects the social formation of rules and norms, which are fundamental elements of security frameworks (Deleuze et al., 1977).

Given Nepal's geopolitical sensitivity and security dynamics, **this paper's primary goal** is to use the Schizoanalysis framework to examine how Nepal manages its foreign and security policy in the face of great power competition.

2. Schizoanalytical Framework.

The schizoanalytical framework, developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, prioritizes intra-subjective development over subject-to-subject relations and can offer an alternative to conventional research approaches (Biddle, 2010). This framework is applied in this study to analyze International Relations from the perspective of Nepal's security dynamics, as it emphasizes dynamism, fluidity, and change in thinking about society and politics.

In this framework, key concepts of schizoanalysis, such as deterritorialization and reterritorialization, molecular vs. molar lines, and machines of desire, are linked to Nepal's security dynamics in the extraordinary power rivalry.

2.1. Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization.

International economic forces, political-military rivalry, and even war are ways the international system affects domestic politics (Gourevitch, 1978). In changing world order, these are key concepts in Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, referring to the processes by which identities, systems, and structures transform. Deterritorialization is replacing preexisting connections or structures to create a new identity. New political strategies emphasizing national expression and self-expression result from deterritorialization in international relations, which challenges the pre-existing and established norms and policies (Pugh et al., 2007). While following these changes or initial policy disruptions, **reterritorialization** is the reconfiguration or re-establishment of structures. Reterritorialization is the process by which states take back authority, reinterpret their sovereignty, and develop new strategies for addressing foreign affairs in global political settings (Brenner, 1999). This study analyzes Nepal's policy shifts from the perspective of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

2.2. Molecular vs. Molar Lines.

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between **molecular** and **molar** lines to describe social and psychological tendencies (Merriman, 2019). These concepts can be applied to understand

the underlying forces in international politics. **Molar lines** represent large-scale, relatively stable, rigid macrostructures such as social institutions and the state. In international relations, "molar lines" can be defined as the overt, formal relationships between nations, such as trade deals, military alliances, treaties, and diplomatic accords, which are more predictable. On the other hand, **molecular lines**, in contrast, are micro, more fluid, and less visible formations that can be informal and influenced by external pressure, domestic agitations, or instability, bypassing existing mechanisms.

With this framework, the study will distinguish between the more visible, structured (molar) relationships and the less visible, dynamic (molecular) interactions in Nepal's foreign policy.

2.3. Machines of Desire.

Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis develops a desire to bridge the gap between Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalysis and emphasize the necessity for new connections and developments (Smith, 2019). Metaphorically, humans are referenced as the "machines of desire". Machines of desire could be interpreted as the underlying urges or motivations that propel state acts on the international scene in the context of state behavior (Simon, 1983). This could involve the need for security, territory expansion, economic dominance, or global renown. Nations form alliances, engage in conflicts, and form relationships based on these desires (Fordham, 2011). Academia on IR can investigate how desires coincide, clash, or create new geopolitical realities by seeing state relations as desiring machines. Desire for territorial integrity, economic growth, and political stability in Nepal's context will influence the policy shift.

By integrating Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical conceptions into a helpful framework appropriate for geopolitical research, we can employ a multi-step approach to establish a technique for applying schizoanalysis to studying Nepal's security dynamics. This approach would center on comprehending the intricate interactions between flows, interruptions, and wants that define the security landscape of Nepal.

3. Analysis of Nepal's Security Dynamics.

3.1. Historical Context.

Nepal's important geopolitical location and changing diplomatic practices have affected its foreign policy and security approach over a long history. Nepal's first documented security and foreign policy can be taken as "Dibya Sandesh". King Prithvi Narayan Shah's Dibya Upadesh, which emphasizes the defense of integrity and sovereignty, offers practical advice for Nepalese diplomacy (Baral, 2020). Despite the lack of viable alternatives, Nepal's foreign policy from 1770 to the 1970s has continuously opted for the same approaches (Goodall, 1974). During this period of Prithivi Narayan Shah to Mahendra Shah, Nepal optimized the strategy of survival (Rose, 1971).

Shah envisioned maintaining relations with two neighbors: India (then East India Company) and China (then Tibet). This state (Nepal) is like a yam (gourd)between two stones. One must maintain a strong friendship with the Emperor of China and the emperor of the sea (English Emperor) in the south (Narayan Shah, 2018).

Shah was clear about the security threat to Nepal's sovereignty and dignity. As the British (East-India Company) were occupying India and eying on Nepal's Plane area, Shah planned to tackle them. However, he was sure that Nepal should take a defensive approach.

He (the British) is occupying Hindustan. He is eyeing the plane area (of Nepal also). When Hindustan (Indian) people wake up (do not tolerate them), they may find it difficult to stay there. He might have been searching for a safe fort, and there is every possibility he may come here any day. Therefore, we must find out our Sandhisarpan (weak points) and we also have to change them into strong forts. We must create obstacles in the way they try to enter into. Mind it they may arrive here anytime. Do not go there (down) to fight with them. Let them come here (hilly region) and fight with them. If we could do so, they could easily be beheaded at the crossings of the Chure Hills. If we could do so we would be able to collect arms and ammunition which would suffice for our Four to Five Generations. And we will be able to extend our border up to the Ganga River. If they could not fight with us they would try to come here employing Lolo Poto (tricks) or any other types of conspiracies (Divya Upadesh).

This shows that the desire for territorial integrity and expanding borders influence the setting of this policy toward international relations. Nepal's fragile geostrategic position makes it difficult to achieve its objectives of peace, prosperity, and advancement in its external ties. Nepal's foreign policy history under King Prithvi Narayan Shah shows that, despite having few other options, the country successfully maintained its identity in the face of regional geopolitics and security conflicts. Other "mini-states" may find these lessons helpful (Christensen, 1974).

British India was the clear focus of isolationist foreign policy during the Rana era. Jung Bahadur was the first prime minister of Nepal to visit the United Kingdom, having done so in 1850, knowing that Britain held a monopoly over the entire region and that China's might was declining at the time (Khanal, 2019).

According to Rose, Junga Bahadur's ascent to power was facilitated by his adherence to British-Indian foreign policy (1971). Because he owed the British money, he decided on a policy centered on Britain, which remained in place during the Rana era. The non-aligned ideal was violated during this time as "Gorkhas" fought for the British in two World Wars. This can be considered as deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Nepal's policy. Furthermore, the agreement with East India Company, the Participation of Gorkhas in World War, and external pressure can showcase the Molecular and Molar lines through the desire for regime protection, which can relate to the "Machine of Desire" in the Schizoanalysis framework.

Nepal's King Mahendra, who ruled from 1955 to 1972, is renowned for his attempts to broaden the country's foreign policy and to experiment with the diversification of foreign and security policy with the mindset of protection of sovereignty (Rose, 1971). His policies attempted to support Nepal's modernity and sense of national identity while counterbalancing the impact of China and India, the two giant neighbors. King Mahendra tried to balance the country's foreign policy with China and India to promote Nepal's independence and economically lessen its reliance on India. In addition, he favored diversifying political, economic, and cultural ties outside of India, which was a purposeful attempt to improve Nepal's reputation abroad (Goodall, 1974; Untawale, 1974).

A key figure in modernizing and nation-building initiatives, King Mahendra oversaw industrialization, trade diversification, economic planning, and agrarian reforms to reduce

economic dependency (Jha, 1971). Moreover, during King Mahendra's reign, the monarchy maintained its old institutions while adjusting to new roles. This includes attempts to forge an autonomous national identity and include new groups in the political system. During this period, the primary goal of Nepal's foreign policy was to maintain its unity and sovereignty, with strong ties to its neighbors China and India serving as the cornerstone of the kingdom's foreign policy (Anand, 1977).

During the period of Mahendra, under the Prime Ministership of BP Koirala, Nepal has attempted – and mostly succeeded – to convert her nonaligned policy and stance toward China and India into a "performance of cordiality". However, by the late 1950s, Nepal had started to expand its presence in global politics after becoming a member of the UN. To avoid giving the idea that its foreign policy is a direct replica of China's and India's, Nepal is broadening the range of its diplomatic ties, including those with Israel (Kozicki, 1969).

In summary, Nepal's foreign policy and security approach have always involved a careful balancing act driven by internal dynamics and external pressure from nearby superpowers. This complex strategy aims to protect Nepal's national interests while adjusting to changing regional and international environments.

3.2. Major Shift After 1990.

Nepal experienced profound political change after 1990, going from an autocratic monarchy to a multi-party democracy and a federal democratic republic. An important turning point in Nepal's history was the People's Movement of 1990, which ended the Panchayat government and created a constitutional monarchy with multiparty democracy. Despite its difficulties, including political unrest and the development of the Maoist insurgency, this era saw a significant shift towards democratic government (Koirala, 1991). Due to political disputes both within and between parties, the emergence of the Maoist insurgency, and the royal massacre, Nepal experienced severe political instability after 1990.

Starting in 1996, the Maoist insurgency presented a serious threat to Nepal's nascent democracy, sparking a ten-year battle that claimed over 17,000 lives and altered the country's political terrain (Egreteau, 2012). These major political shifts have impacted international relations. Not only that, global political developments, particularly the reforms implemented in

Eastern Europe and the downfall of the Soviet Union, have encouraged Nepal's political development and international relations beyond the neighbor (Baral, 1992).

With political transformations, Nepal witnessed continued political instability and constitutional challenges. This transformation and political instability have significantly impacted Nepal's security dynamics. The tension between political and military entities is a recurrent subject influenced by internal and foreign sources (Upreti, 2021). The conflict between Military leadership and Maoist leadership (the first elected government of the Republic of Nepal) brought Indian influences over Nepal's military, too. Once, the former secretary of the External Affairs Ministry of India also a former ambassador of India to Nepal, Shyam Sharan, stated that India had interfered When the Prachand-led government tried to sack army chief Rookmagud Katawal (Acharya, 2012). To reduce the Prachanda government to a minority, India pressured the coalition parties to withdraw support. Then, the ambassador of India to Nepal, Rakesh Shood, met with Prime Minister Prachanda and was pressured not to sack Katawal (ToI, 2009).

A significant development that formally established federalism, secularism, and republicanism in Nepal was the adoption of the 2015 Constitution. These changes have implications for National Security dynamics through the formulation of security policies and reforms in the security dynamics (Malagodi, 2011). As a landlocked country, the changing security landscape shapes Nepal's security strategy and its relations with China and India, especially with China's increasing influence in the region(Kunwar, 2023).

Nepal's republican transition has allowed the country to build bilateral ties with countries outside its immediate neighborhood and integrate into regional and global frameworks to ensure its existence (Lohani, 2023). Establishing the National Security Council and creating a comprehensive National Security Policy are steps toward better adapting Nepal's security apparatus to fit its federal democratic structure and regional security realities (Sharma, 2023).

4. Analyzing the Political Transformation through the Schizoanalysis Lens.

Over time, Nepal's security policies have undergone considerable changes due to a combination of foreign factors, mainly from China, India, and the US-led Western Allies, and internal forces like political instability.

4.1. Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization of Policy.

Nepal's foreign policy has witnessed significant deterritorialization and reterritorialization in recent decades. The start of the Maoist insurgency 1996 signaled a critical deterritorialization stage in Nepal's security environment. The insurgency caused instability in Nepal's internal security and eventually resulted in the reterritorialization of the Maoists into the mainstream political framework following the peace agreements of 2006 (Subedi, 2010). With essential ramifications for national security strategy, this represented a distinct transition from centralized state control to a more distributed power structure (Thapa & Sharma, 2009).

On the one hand, the rise of the Maoist insurgency has affected other major South Asian countries, undermining Nepal's democratic efforts (Taras, 2006). Conversely, though it has in the war on terror framework, the Maoist insurgency in Nepal has significant regional and global ramifications that include China, India, and the United States (Cottle & Keys, 2007). With the further establishment of the federal democratic republic, formulating a new constitution can be observed as reterritorialization. Due to its location, Nepal has historically been the target of intense foreign influences that have shaped its security strategies (Dabhade & Pant, 2004). Nepal has had to constantly adjust its position to balance these powers due to the intricate interplay between seeking help from these neighbors while retaining sovereignty. This has resulted in a dynamic process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Nepal's foreign policy and security initiatives have been greatly influenced by this, which has involved allying or separating from these countries due to the shifting political and security needs (Karki, 2013).

Traditionally, India's sphere of influence is due to its proximity, shared economy, and shared culture; Nepal's security strategy frequently considers this intimate, sometimes overpowering effect. To counterbalance Indian domination, Nepal often diversifies its international contacts while maintaining a certain level of autonomy in its foreign policy and security measures (Dabhade & Pant, 2004). Due to economic blockades and border disputes, Nepal must also reassess its diplomatic posture to lessen its historical reliance on India (Dahal, 2018) and deterritorialize its policy.

Meanwhile, China's prominence in the world economy has significantly impacted Nepal's security strategy. Nepal is part of China's periphery, which it wants to be secure and stable to

prevent any anti-Chinese activities that may come from Tibetan activists in Nepal. It has actively worked to deepen its relations with China as part of reterritorialization, supporting programs like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). With this change, it hopes to balance its geopolitical posture between its two formidable neighbors by broadening its economic alliances and taking advantage of China's ascent (Singh & Shekhar, 2023). This alignment change will significantly impact Nepal's internal and foreign security policies. Nepal may profit economically and see infrastructure development from further engagement with China. Still, it must also manage possible strategic concerns from India and ensure its actions do not result in a significant geopolitical backlash (Karki, 2013). Because of this influence, Nepal has frequently erred on caution, balancing its policies to keep China happy while interacting with other world powers (Wagle, 2020).

With growing Chinese influence in Nepal, the US plays a significant role in the country's security dynamic through developmental aid and diplomatic engagement. Through its Indo-Pacific strategy, the US aims to contain China (He & Li, 2020). However, the strong geopolitical effects of formidable neighbors limit the EU's normative role. Therefore, the EU functions as a nation involved in a regional geopolitical struggle because of the conflicting interests of the two rising powers (Chand, 2019).

In these geopolitical dynamics, Nepal's foreign and security policy is predominantly distinguished by its endeavors to maintain equilibrium between the impacts of these powers. The tactic entails interacting with all parties to some degree while avoiding a strong alliance with anyone that can incite a retaliatory move from another (Karki, 2013). Maintaining national sovereignty and utilizing help and investment from these nations to further development objectives depend on this delicate balancing act.

4.2. Molecular Lines and Molar Lines.

While observing Nepal's foreign policy practices, we can witness Molecular and Molar lines that have affected the foreign and security policies. Nepal's security and policy environment have been greatly influenced by internal political instabilities, mainly due to outside influences like Chinese investments, Indian policies, and US engagements.

In Nepal, the MCC compact controversy from the US sparked a heated public and political debate. The MCC compact dispute and protests highlight a broader skepticism and cautious approach to international accords, showing Nepal's foreign policy is highly influenced by home politics when accepting foreign investments and aid (Raj, 2023) and creating the molecular lines during the ratification of MCC in Parliament. The government was forced to pass it due to its molar lines, created by the compact signed with MCC. Though the movement made the molecular line and was of Chinese concern, the government of Nepal rejected the State Partnership Program (SPP), which was subjected to being passed (Li, 2022). These molar and molecular lines show that Nepal's security dynamics are significantly shaped by the country's broader structural policies and alignments, both mandated by the state and impacted by outside forces. Nepal's geopolitical location between China and India and its relations with other international players like the US significantly impact these dynamics (Baniya, 2023). Lately, Nepal has been dramatically affected by the ongoing rivalry between these two regional giants, which forces it to carefully navigate to preserve its political independence and sovereignty while interacting with both neighbors to secure economic gains and national security (Mantoo, 2021). Nepal has sought to maintain its autonomy in international affairs by pursuing a non-aligned foreign policy through its documented policy and constitutions. These molar lines have sometimes been affected by molecular lines created by internal conflicts in Nepal's politics and external pressure.

Especially following the 2006 peace accord and the 2015 ratification of a new constitution, formulations of Nepal's policy and legal frameworks were significantly impacted by external factors, including two neighbors and the US and EU member states. Sometimes, this outside interference makes it more difficult for Nepal to assert its sovereignty properly (Bhatta, 2013).

4.3. "Machines of Desire": Desire for Development.

Nepal's decisions in the geopolitical arena are influenced mainly by its aspirations for independence in foreign policy, political stability, and economic prosperity. These aspirations impact Nepal's geopolitical actions, particularly about its neighboring giants, China and India, and other global actors. Attracting aid and investments – essential for developing infrastructure and economic diversification – forces Nepal to invite non-regional actors (Baniya, 2023) using

economic diplomacy to capitalize on its geopolitical weaknesses (Khanal, 2023). On the other hand, Nepal is stressing its endeavoring vision of transforming the nation from "landlocked" to "land-linked" in international forums with faith in changing the destiny of being "prisoners of geography" to "pioneers of prosperity" with upgrading connectivity to regional and global market (MoFA, 2021). To change the India-locked narrative, Nepal extended its policy toward the North with China's rise, providing a favorable option for balancing intra-regional power and opportunities for infrastructure development (Pankaew & Kaewkhunok, 2022). Despite the country's wishes, external powers, including the US, China, and India, have utilized economic investments to influence Nepal's policies and political stability. Power nations have pursued infrastructure projects inside Nepal to obtain strategic clout. Although these investments are suitable for Nepal's economy, they have conditions that limit Nepal's capacity to create independent policies (Nayak, 2008).

Nepal's complicated security situation is caused by the overlapping interests of China and India and interventions by other external countries like the United States. As a result, Nepal frequently finds itself on a road that aims to protect its national interests while also trying to placate these nations. Due to these countries' strategic use of aid, development initiatives, and diplomatic contacts, Nepal may need to modify its security policy to consider external actors' continuous demands and influences (Karki, 2021).

5. Concluding Remarks.

Overall, Nepal's strategic shift toward striking a balance in its relations with China and India reflects a sophisticated approach to diplomacy, signifying a departure from India's long-standing reliance on it and a move toward cooperating with newly powerful nations. The act of reterritorialization highlights Nepal's endeavors to maneuver intricate regional dynamics to preserve its sovereignty and advance its economy. The continual interplay between these outside forces and Nepal's strategic maneuvers of deterritorialization and reterritorialization highlight the intricacy of the dynamics of regional security as well as the difficulties smaller states have in maintaining connections with more powerful nations.

In the future, Nepal must strengthen its diplomatic and strategic capacities to successfully navigate the complex web of regional geopolitics. A well-coordinated, comprehensive foreign

and security strategy that genuinely represents the nation's interests while considering external pressures is required for Nepal to remain stable and develop. Nepal's security and strategic environment are shaped by these structural strategies and alignments, which are influenced by internal and external forces. They combine the needs of geopolitical balancing, national development, and sovereignty with strategic balancing. To prevent undue influence over Nepal's internal affairs, handling molar and molecular lines and pursuing political stability and independence in foreign policy calls for a diplomatic approach that carefully regulates these linkages.

Nepal's aspirations for prosperity and independent foreign policy are intertwined, and it frequently calls for a careful balancing act on the global stage. Nepal engages in active trade and investment relations with China and India to pursue its economic goals. In the meantime, maintaining political independence and stability in foreign policy calls for a diplomatic strategy that carefully monitors these connections to avoid exerting undue influence over domestic matters in Nepal. This policy seeks to protect Nepal's sovereignty while putting the country in a favorable geopolitical position on the regional and international stages. Finally, this schizoanalysis of Nepal's security dynamics provides a broader understanding of geopolitical vulnerability and opportunities for tiny states in excellent power rivalry to maintain their survival.

Conflicts of Interest:
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Bionote:
Bidhur Dhakal is a PhD candidate at the School of Politics and International Relations, East China Normal University (Shanghai, China).
The sphere of interest: International Relations and Political Science.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8373-8737
Nazir Muhammad is a Researcher at the School of Politics and International Relations, East China Normal University (Shanghai, China).
The sphere of interest: Comparative Politics and Global Governance.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1458-0152
Suloza Khadka is a Student at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs, Fudan University (Shanghai, China).
The sphere of interest: Public Policy and Diplomacy.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2146-3972

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Bidhur Dhakal, Nazir Muhammad, and Suloza Khadka contributed to the design and implementation of the research article, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

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