Map, Flag and Nepali Nationalism

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Abstract

Taking two recent instances of hot nationalism in Nepal, triggered by events that infringed on the national symbols such as map and flag, this thesis explores how these events informed the frames and discourse of ordinary Nepalis as captured by the reaction videos on YouTube. I discuss how the reaction videos reinforce Nepali state nationalism ideologically, reflecting the strength of nationalist ideology in public consciousness - despite a significant shift in the configuration of Nepali nationalism in recent years due to political change. I suggest nationalism is best conceived as an ideology from which various discourses of nationalism are derived with the state discourse of nationalism being the most powerful. I underline the analytical significance of hot nationalism as it brings to fore what constitutes the banal in banal nationalism. Hot nationalism, in response to the perceived violation of national symbols, facilitates analysis of how people discursively frame the otherwise banal national symbols in the context of their violation, the kind of frames and discourse that ritualized events do not activate, and hence, can provide insight into the relationship between the nationalist ideology, national symbols and the bottom-up discursive practices in specific contexts.

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Chapter 1: The Context of Nepali Nationalism

1.1 Introduction

Surrounded by India in the south, east and west and China in the north, Nepal is often known to the world as a small Himalayan country. However, Nepal is neither really small (if not compared to its giant neighbors) nor is it exclusively Himalayan. The country officially covers an area of 147,516 sq km, after adding 335 sq km of land on map recently in 2020 following a map-cum-territorial dispute with India a year earlier (Sharma and Khadka 2020). Geographically speaking, Nepal has been divided into three ecological belts: i) Himalayan/mountain; ii) Hills; and iii) Plains (*Terai*). Based on the old map covering territory that Nepal actually controls, the Himalayan region covers about 35.2 percent of the total land area, the Hills and the Plains occupy 41.7 percent and 23.1 percent respectively (Bhuju et. al 2007). Nepal's two icons of nationalism, popular in tourism circles, are associated with the Himalayan region and the Plains: the tallest peak of the world 'Mt. Everest' and Buddha's birthplace 'Lumbini' respectively (Bhandari 2019). However, the seat of power in Nepal has always resided in the hills and it is where Nepali national identity and language evolved over time since the founding of the state under King Prithivi Narayan Shah of the Gorkha empire in 1768 centered in the Kathmandu Valley. The 2011 census has recorded 126 caste/ethnic groups in Nepal with 123 languages spoken as mother tongue out of the total population of 26,494,504 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012).[1] According to the 2011 census, there are ten religions practiced in Nepal, out of which adherents of Hinduism stand at 81.3 percent (Ibid. 2012).

Nepali nationalism first crystallized in the mid-twentieth century with the efforts of King Mahendra Shah. At the time, it was defined by the three inter-connected pillars, namely

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[1] The preliminary report of 2021 census puts Nepal's population at 29,192,480.

Monarchy, Hinduism and Nepali language (Onta 1996). With an aim to assimilate the diverse population into Hindu norms and values to create a homogenous identity, Nepali national identity was largely shaped in the image of ruling hill Hindu elites (Gurung 2003; Lawoti 2012). Various state mechanisms have been identified by scholars as a means to consolidate and advance this nationalism such as census (Bhattachan 2013; Gaige 1975), language, literature and education (Hutt 1984; Onta 1996, 1997; Ragsdale 1989), music (Grandin 2005; Gurung 1993), political system and constitutional provisions/design (Lawoti 2007; Malagodi 2013) and so forth. Scholars have also produced a good deal of writings that shed light on the dynamics of ethnic resistance to the Nepali state in various realms and their collective efforts to claim state resources and redefine the state in an inclusive mold (Gellner et. al 1997; Lawoti and Hangen 2013). Fewer writers working on Nepal have explored the dynamics of ethnicity and nationalism in internet and social media (for example, Dennis 2017; Phyak 2015). Considering the increasing number of social media users in the country over the years, currently standing at 13.70 million with 5.4 percent increase between January 2021 and January 2022 (DataReportal 2022), it is remarkable that scholars have not yet sufficiently tapped on the potential of naturally occurring data to examine various aspects of contemporary post-Monarchy Nepali nationalism.

Since 2015, Nepal is constitutionally a federal democratic secular republic. This political transformation is a cumulative outcome of a number of related events since the 1990s. Though Nepal attained democracy in 1990, after a hiatus of three decades, the unitary and centralized structure of Nepal was preserved by the democratic constitution promulgated in 1990. The constitution also retained the supremacy of Hinduism and Nepali language despite opposition from the budding ethnic movement (Lawoti 2007). In 1996, Nepal saw the emergence of a Maoist insurgency that went on to virtually paralyze life outside the major cities. In 2001, King Birendra Shah, the successor of King Mahendra Shah, was mysteriously killed along with his

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entire immediate family, which paved the way for his brother King Gyanendra Shah to come to throne. Shortly after coming to power, King Gyanendra concentrated power in his hands and banned the mainstream political parties citing their inability to deal with the growing Maoist insurgency and to govern the country effectively, among others. Soon, the alienated political parties joined hands with the Maoist insurgents to raise a mass movement against the King's autocratic government and to reinstate democracy. After days of sustained street protest across the country, the King relinquished power to the political parties in April 2006. The mainstream political parties signed a Comprehensive Peace Accord with the Maoist insurgents in the same year, which formally ended the Maoist insurgency. A constitution assembly was elected in 2008 with an aim to write a new constitution in keeping with the times. The first session of the assembly overwhelmingly voted for the dissolution of the two-and-a-half-centuries-long institution of Monarchy. Following the failure of the first constitution assembly to produce a new constitution, a constitution assembly was again elected in 2013 which finally delivered the long-awaited constitution in 2015, which however didn't satisfy some ethnic and regionalist aspirations and grievances (Hutt 2020; Lawoti 2016; Malagodi 2021). However, this constitutional transition eliminated two of the three pillars of Nepali nationalism: i) the institution of Monarchy and ii) Hinduism as a state religion. Though the constitution retained Nepali as the official language of Nepal, it accorded national language status to all languages spoken as a mother-tongue in Nepal with the possibility of using additional language(s), apart from Nepali, officially at the provincial level. Furthermore, it also allows for obtaining education in one's mother tongue (Pradhan 2020).

To maintain a focus on the symbolic dimension of nationalism in Nepal, with reference to the national symbols such as map and flag, it would be prudent to lay out an appropriate context in the following sections to the research that this thesis embarks on. In my research, I explore how

events that violate national symbols are framed and discussed by members of the putative nation. One important source of data to that end, that has not been tapped in nationalism scholarship, is the reaction videos available on YouTube - an audio-visual social media platform that came into existence in 2005. The reaction videos made by ordinary young citizens, which are by no means anonymous, that directly respond to such events are obviously useful in nationalism research, especially in the strand of nationalism scholarship that accords significance to the role of masses or the ordinary folks in the production and reproduction of nationalism in the mundane everyday spheres (Antonsich 2016; Billig 1995; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Goode and Stroup 2015; Skey 2011; Thompson 2001). The events in question are: i) The map-cum-territorial dispute between Nepal and India of November 2019 and ii) The controversial rap music video featuring a flag burning scene uploaded on YouTube in August 2020. Both these events stoked, what Billig calls "hot nationalism" (Billig 1995), among many Nepalis and this was also reflected in the reaction videos that emerged in the wake of the respective events. The first event concerns the external dimension of nationalism and the second event concerns the internal dimension of nationalism. Together, these two events shed light on the working of nationalist ideology, which by definition demands some kind of cultural homogeneity within the political unit and cultural heterogeneity between the political units (Brubaker 2012).

In this thesis, I ask the following questions: i) How does the violation of national symbols inform the frames and discourse used by the speakers in the reaction videos on YouTube? ii) How do the speakers in the reaction videos discursively reinforce or contest Nepali nationalism? Based on the analysis of the frames and discourse used by the speakers in the reaction videos, I show that the reconfiguration of Nepali nationalism due to political change has not weakened the hold of nationalist ideology in public consciousness. This is demonstrated by their strong

identification with national symbols as generally observed and particularly evident in the frames and discourse used by the speakers in the reaction videos. Far from contesting the state nationalism, the reaction videos, which also captured the popular outburst in response to the perceived violation of national symbols, served to reinforce the Nepali state nationalism. However, this process has an ideological aspect to it as it involves making judgments on the basis of certain taken-for-granted assumptions and limited information. Through this specific case study from Nepal, I suggest that nationalism is best conceived as an ideology whereas there can be many discourses of nationalism used by individuals and groups that may contest state nationalism or reinforce state nationalism - but only with some subliminal reference to nationalist ideology. I underline the analytical significance of hot nationalism in understanding nationhood. While hot nationalism is enabled by banal nationalism, as Calhoun (2017) has observed in Billig's (1995) work, hot nationalism also enables the manifestation of what constitutes the banal in nationalism in a context that is different from the routine every day contexts. Hence, hot nationalism offers an opportunity to analyze how people discursively frame the otherwise banal national symbols in the context of their violation, the kind of frames and discourse that ritualized events do not invoke, and hence, can provide insight into the relationship between the nationalist ideology, national symbols and the bottom-up discursive practices in specific contexts.

1.2 Making of the geo-body of Nepal

The 2019 map and territorial dispute between Nepal and India was over a small trijunction constituting of places called Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura in the high Himalayas connecting Nepal, India and China. The source of the dispute goes back to the British colonial presence in India that came to an end in 1947. The independent India inherited the agreements that the British made with the non-colonized Nepal. One defining agreement between the two

was the Sugauli Treaty 1816, signed as a peace treaty following Anglo-Nepal (Gorkha) War 1814-16, that resulted in the demarcation of borders between the Kingdom of Gorkha and the British India for the first time.[2] Scholars have written insightful accounts of how Nepal came to adopt the modern concept of borders as a result of its military encounter and subsequent engagement with the British colonial power in the early nineteenth century (Bughrat 1984; Michael 2012; Stiller 2018). Drawing on his study of the formation of Siam nationhood in the nineteenth century, Thongchai Winichakul has theorized this same process as the formation of 'geo-body' of a nation engendered by the twin advance of modern geography and mapping (Winichakul 1994, 1996). For Winichakul, geo-body is not merely about territoriality of the nationhood. Once a geo-body comes into existence, it also becomes a source of deep emotions.

Nepal's step towards the formation of its geo-body was the Anglo-Nepal (Gorkha) War 1814-16. The context of the war makes it clear that the military confrontation between them was inevitable for at least two reasons. Firstly, the continuing territorial expansion of the Gorkhali empire by the early nineteenth century had ensured a collision with the British East India company whose territorial interests came to be extended close to the Gorkha's territorial possessions in the Southern plains. Along this common frontier, territorial disputes soon arose between the Gorkha kingdom and the East India Company where there existed no clear boundaries. Secondly, the territorial dispute couldn't be settled as the British and the Gorkhalis didn't share the same conception of territory. The Company officials saw the need to tidy up these boundaries through surveying and map-making, which couldn't happen unless their disputes around tribute, taxation and tenurial claims of the frontier territories were settled. A

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[2] Even at the turn of the twentieth century, the term 'Nepal' still didn't refer to the entire territory that the King ruled. Rather, 'Nepal' was largely used to refer to the Kathmandu Valley only where the Gorkhali state authority resided after the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley. As the Shah dynasty moved from a place called Gorkha to the Kathmandu Valley, they perceived themselves as Gorkhalis until the 1930s, when they officially adopted the term 'Nepal' to refer to the entire kingdom in accordance with how the British identified them.

joint border commission was constituted in 1813 to resolve the dispute, but it soon emerged that the members of the commission representing the two sides operated with different principles on the border question (Stiller 2018). To be clear, map-making was not alien to the Gorkhalis as evidenced by a letter issued (dated 1807) by King Rana Bahadur Shah where he asked his subordinates to pay Kesav Gurung a sum of Rs. 325 "as a reward for drawing a map of Kangra" (Gurung 1981: 6). Nor the concept of border was alien to the Gorkhali imagination for the concept can be located in royal land grants with information about demarcation and enclosing of the monastery lands (Bughart 1984). What was new to the Gorkhali worldview was the drawing of linear boundaries to demarcate and differentiate one polity from another through surveying and mapping (Michael 2012; Stiller 2018).

Prior to the encounter with the British, the Kingdom of Gorkha's territorial claims were based on their proprietary authority in which the various states, under the suzerainty of Gorkha kingdom, paid regular tributes to the kingdom as taxes. Each state had their own collectors, recognized by the kingdom, whose job was to collect taxes from the people, primarily cultivators, living/working in the territory under their ambit. According to Bughart (1984), the rulers of the Kingdom imagined that their reach extended to all of their possession (*muluk*) and realm (*desa*). Possession basically referred to the territorial units that had tributary relationship with the Gorkha kingdom whereas the realm referred to the territorial units over which the rulers exercised ritual authority. The British forced the Gorkhalis to conceive space and authority in completely different terms. As Bughart explains, the boundaries of the possession and the realm hardly coincided in the past. Realm by definition extended beyond the territorial possession. Within realm, Hindu caste system provided a socio-cosmic order that bounded all people in hierarchal relationships that lived therein. The realm was centered in the tutelary deity of the Gorkhali ruler and spread out in different directions marked by different temples. In the

wake of the war with the British, the boundaries of the possessions and realms, which earlier didn't coincide, had to coincide.

By 1814, the territory of the Gorkha kingdom had extended up to the Sutlej River in the west and to the Teesta River in the east. The war with the British resulted in the diminution of the Gorkhali's territory substantially with the signing of the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816. The Kingdom of Gorkha's territorial stretch was reduced to the Mahakali River in the west and to the Mechi River in the east. The Gorkhalis further lost territories in the plains to the British, some of which were returned shortly afterwards and some more was returned as a gift in 1860 in recognition of the Gorkhalis' support for the suppression of the so-called Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 in British India. These territorial exchanges with the British defined the present-day boundaries of Nepal. No wonder that the early maps of Nepal are mostly of British origin (Gurung 1981). The British started the survey and border demarcation processes soon after the conclusion of the war, but the work was not finished during the British rule in India (Shrestha 2022). By then, the centrality of mapping to territorial administration and claims in the modern period was not lost to the Nepalis. The country's own preliminary official effort at publishing maps can be traced back to the 1950s (Gurung 1981). Over the years, map has become a taken-for-granted symbol for the territory of the country. It is almost ubiquitous in educational establishments and government offices, among others, in Nepal. Schools expect their students not only to recognize the map of their country, but also to draw it from memory during examinations. Another such national symbol that all school children are expected to absorb is the flag of the country.

1.3 Making of the nation and the national flag

The second event that I focus on in this thesis is the controversial flag burning music video that came out in August 2020 challenging the legitimacy of the 'national' status of the flag. Any

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dispute on national flag sheds light on the existing differences around the definition of 'we-hood' as a national flag is deemed to be a condensed symbol of the nation (Eriksen 2007). A discussion of the national flag therefore requires an inquiry into the process of nation-building. In Nepal, the establishment of territorial state preceded the development of nationalism (Nawa 2016). Prior to King Prithivi Narayan Shah's conquest, the country was divided into many autonomous principalities each inhabited by different ethnic groups with their own culture and languages (Toffin 2009). King Prithivi Narayan Shah of Gorkha, one of the then principalities in the Western hills of today's Nepal, embarked on a conquest mission annexing territories inhabited and controlled by people of different ethnic groups. The conquest started by this Hindu King and later, continued by his successors, also facilitated the spread of migrants of Hindu castes across the hills. These Hindu migrants, patronized by the emergent state in many ways, played a key role in spreading a common hill culture around Nepali language and Hinduism. The emergence and consolidation of a unitary state under the Gorkhalis entailed the loss of self-rule by different ethnic communities such as Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Limbus and so forth in their traditional homelands (Ibid. 2009).[3]

The assimilative thrust of the new state governed by the patrons of Hinduism increased over the years. During the Rana regime (1846-1951), a dynastic oligarchy that came to power in 1846 by neutralizing Shah Monarchy but not abolishing the latter, Hindu scripture *Manu Smriti* was made the basis of the country's first legal code known as *Muluki Ain* enacted in 1854, which divided the population into different castes in the order of ranks using the logic of ritual/caste purity: i) Wearers of Holy Threads; ii) Non-enslavable alchohol drinkers; iii) Enslavable alchohol drinkers; iv) Impure but touchable castes and v) Impure but untouchable castes

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[3] The ethnic labels, as they are used today, also crystallized alongside the emergence and consolidation of the Gorkhali state.

(Gurung 2003; Höfer 2004). This model was particularly aimed at incorporating the various non-Hindu ethnic groups who did not fit into the traditional categories of the Hindu Varna model constituting of Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra with Brahmins at the top and Shudra at the bottom. *Muluki Ain* was enforced throughout the territory of the Kingdom and the violation of its various stipulations was made punishable by law.[4] The Rana rulers also made some concrete attempts to institute Nepali language as the language of education, for example, in the civil service training and School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination in the first half of the twentieth century (Pradhan 2020). In the Government of Nepal Act 1948 promulgated by the Rana Prime Minister Padma Shamsher, before the end of Rana regime in 1951 and the subsequent adoption of democracy, Nepali language has been recognized as the national language of Nepal.

Coming to power in the post-Rana era in 1955 following the death of his father King Tribhuvan Shah, King Mahendra built on these legacies to adapt various concepts of the modern state system to project Nepal as a nation-state (Bughart 1984). Considering Nepal's critical geopolitical location between two giant countries, King Mahendra found it imperative to work on nation-building to maintain the country's distinctiveness as a nation. A national identity revolving around the institution of Monarchy would also help King Mahendra to consolidate his own regime. In 1960, King Mahendra took over the reins of the country by dissolving the parliament citing incompetence of the political parties to govern the country and thereby, bringing a decade-long experiment with democracy to an end. He declared that democracy was not suitable for Nepal's soil. A new constitution was promulgated in 1962 which designated Nepal as a Monarchial Hindu state for the first time and Nepali as the national language of Nepal in continuation of the provision in the replaced 1959 constitution of Nepal. In Nepal,

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[4] The Muluki Ain 1854 was replaced by a new Muluki Ain more than 100 years later in 1963. The new Muluki Ain, that came out during the reign of King Mahendra, didn't recognize the legal status of caste hierarchy.

much like elsewhere, the national flag has been an integral part of the nation-building project inaugurated by King Mahendra.

Before 1962, Nepal didn't have a standardized national flag, as characteristic of a modern nation-state. One of the tasks of the 1962 constitution was also to adopt a standardized national flag of Nepal. However, the flag was not created anew to be adopted in the constitution. Rather, what was adopted and standardized was already widely in use, but it had lacked uniformity (Shrestha 1998). In the 1962 constitution, the adoption of the national flag of Nepal, with two juxtaposed triangles with top one featuring a white emblem of the crescent moon with eight rays and the bottom one featuring a white emblem of sun with twelve rays, was qualified as a flag "handed down by tradition." This standardized flag did away with the human faces, that the emblems had previously featured, in keeping with the international norms, though its non-quadrilateral shape of the flag stood out as different from that of other countries in the modern world. The Flag Book of the United Nations mentions, "The flag of Nepal is unique because of its traditional Hindu shape" (United Nations 1963: 39). Though the flag originally incorporates influences from both Hinduism and Buddhism, the flag came to be increasingly identified with Hinduism and Monarchy over time (Shrestha 1998). Ethnic activists, at least since the 1980s, have demanded the change of flag on the ground that it is symbolic of Hindu dominance in the country and therefore, not inclusive of other religions and ethnic groups. The current constitution of Nepal promulgated in 2015 has retained the old flag of Nepal, but unlike the 1962 constitution and the 1990 constitution, the national flag is no longer qualified by the phrase "as handed down by tradition," giving a hint to the disputed genealogy of the flag.

1.4 Plan of the thesis

In the rest of the thesis, I first present a conceptual framework that informs my research. Subsequently in the next chapter, I describe the methods that I have used to sample, collect and

analyze the data. In Chapter 4, I focus on the map-cum-territorial dispute between Nepal and India that emerged in November 2019. I examine the major frames and discourse used by the speakers in the reaction videos and present my analysis. In Chapter 5, I turn to the flag burning incident as depicted in a controversial music video uploaded on YouTube in August 2020 and explore the frames/discourse used by the speakers in the reaction videos. In the conclusion chapter, I summarize the argument and key points of my thesis and reflect on the relevance of this thesis in relation to the existing nationalism scholarship.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

As with every research project, my research is also built on a number of theoretical premises: i) Nationalism is an ideology in its own right; ii) Discourses of nationalism derive from the nationalist ideology and there's a complementary between the two; iii) National symbols are empowered by nationalist ideology and are enmeshed in discourses of nationalism, the latter being the domain of contestations and iv) Nationalist ideology inflects the architecture of internet and its various contents aid in the process of (re)production of the nations. I will expand on each of these premises in the following sections.

2.2 Nationalist ideology

In his famous book 'Imagined Communities', Benedict Anderson noted the affinity of nationalism with kinship and religion rather than with an ideology per se (Anderson 2015). Anderson is of the view that nationalism should not be cast alongside ideologies such as liberalism and conservatism, among others. In a morphological analysis of nationalism, Freeden identifies nationalism as a thin ideology as, according to him, it has a limited ideational scope and ambition. Hence, for Freeden, nationalism fails to meet the criteria of a full-fledged and mainstream ideologies such as liberalism and conservatism. He writes, "Its conceptual structure is incapable of providing on its own a solution to questions of social justice, distribution of resources, and conflict-management which mainstream ideologies address" (Freeden 1998: 751). He thus suggests that nationalism survives on more complex and well-developed host ideologies resulting in permutations like liberal nationalism, conservation nationalism, etc. A sustained critique of this position has been offered by Malesevic (2013, 2019). Far from being a thin ideology, Malesevic argues that nationalism is a thick ideology in a sociological sense as

we live in a world where people understand/process social reality through a nation-centric lens (Malesevic 2019). By comparing the normative ideologies inscribed in the constitutions and legal documents of countries with widely different political culture and history such as Islamic Iran, Communist Yugoslavia and the liberal democratic UK with the operative ideologies found in major speeches of the respective leaders and the contents of the respective school textbooks, Malesevic (2006b) shows despite great differences in normative ideologies among these countries, they all translate their normative ideologies into strictly nationalist terms. No normative ideology, according to Malesevic, can work in the modern world without being translated into the idioms of nation. He thus argues that nationalism is a dominant operative framework of modernity (Malesevic 2006b, 2013, 2019).

While there is no single accepted definition of ideology, many scholars tend to disagree with the dismissive view of ideology as false consciousness (Billig et al. 1988; Hammersley 2020; Van Dijk 2013). Ideology, according to Van Dijk (2006), has social, discursive and cognitive components. In other words, ideology consists of belief systems that are socially shared in an axiomatic way and endows groups with a socio-cognitive foundation. It has been noted that nationalism as an ideology makes national identity seem natural (Billig 1995; Malesevic 2006a, 2013). A good demonstration of nationalism as an ideology has been Michael Billig's classic work titled 'Banal Nationalism' (Billig 1995). In Banal Nationalism, Billig (1995) sheds light on the processes of silent (re)production of nationalism in the background of everyday life. He uses the notion of 'flagging' to describe how nation is indicated or flagged every day through various symbols and discourses, which may go unnoticed for most people but all the 'flagging' that one gets exposed to everyday gets registered in their subconscious mind. This is how national identity doesn't get forgotten by citizens and can be summoned up with ease when prompted by various events. He distinguishes between banal nationalism and hot nationalism,

reserving the latter term for the passionate expressions of nationalism during times of disruption. Commenting on Billig's work, Calhoun (2017) clarifies, the obvious understated point, that the hot variety of nationalism depends on banal nationalism. However, as Malesevic (2019) points out, there would be no banal nationalism without its organizational and ideological grounding. The organizational and ideological grounding of nationalism also entails a substantial degree of homogenization (Ibid. 2019), and it is the hall mark of nationalist ideology to insist on internal unity and external differences (Billig 1995; Brubaker 2004).

2.3 Discourses of nationalism

Nationalism has also been discussed as a discourse or a discursive construct (Anderson 2015; Özkirimli 2010; Wodak et al. 2009; Wodak 2018). Malesevic (2006a) traces the discourse framework in identity scholarship back to the 1990s with the decline of the concept of ideology, commonly associated with Marxism, at a time when communism was seemingly in retreat. Hammersley (2020) attributes the decline in the use of ideology in scholarship to the linguistic turn in philosophy and social sciences and more importantly, to the tendency to contrast ideology with true beliefs, scientific method, rationality and so forth. Moreover, the relationship between discourse and ideology is often not clearly stated in scholarship (Määttä 2014). One clear position on the relationship between the two is offered by Van Dijk (2013, 1998, 1995). For Van Dijk, ideology and discourse are closely related in complex ways. He cautions against reducing ideology to discourse and discourse analysis, as common in many contemporary studies (Van Dijk 2013). According to him, discourse expresses ideology and also plays an important role in its acquisition as well as reproduction (Van Dijk 2006). This conception of the relationship between ideology and discourse is particularly fruitful to understand the relationship between nationalist ideology and discourses of nationalism.

While nationalism as an ideology can be conceptualized in a singular sense as a meta-ideology (Malesevic 2013; 2019), nationalism as a discourse can be conceptualized in the plural sense as 'discourses' of/about nationalism (Billig 1995; Malesevic 2013, 2019; Wodak 2018). Van Dijk (2006) reminds us that ideology is not necessarily about dominance, it also defines the terms of resistance and opposition to it. The same may be said about the nationalist ideology. The challenge to state nationalism by minority groups cannot be interpreted as the challenge to nationalist ideology. Instead, the challenge is often justified by advancing an alternative or competing discourse of nationalism. Malesevic writes, "... as long as one lives in a world that is both physically and ideologically nation-centric, the choices an individual and groups are able to make will generally remain more or less nationalist" (Malesevic 2013: 131). Complementing the top-down perspective offered by Billig (1995), recent approach in nationalism has brought the scholarly focus to ordinary people and their agency in producing, reproducing and transforming nationalism from the bottom-up (Brubaker et. al. 2006; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Thompson 2001). This approach, however, has been criticized for not being sensitive enough to ideological and organizational grounding of nationalist experiences (Malesevic 2013). The constant reference of all discourses of nationalism is therefore the nationalist ideology and the nation-state.

2.4 National symbols

According to Cohen (2013), symbols are not contentless, but they are imprecise and their meanings are partly subjective. Cohen writes, "They are, therefore, ideal media through which people can speak a 'common' language, behave in apparently similar ways, participate in the 'same' rituals ... and so forth ... Individuality and commonality are thus reconcilable" (Cohen 2013: 21). Nationalist symbolism is different from other symbolisms because it appeals to nation, sovereignty, history and uniqueness (Elgenius 2011). Territory constitutes an important

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dimension of nationalist ideology. The symbolic existence of territory is in the form of a map: the geo-body of a nation that emerges from the combination of modern geography and the technology of mapping (Winichakul 1994, 1996). Though members of a nation do not have personal experiences of all parts of their national territory, they develop strong emotional ties with the entirety of the territory that their nation supposedly covers (Billig 1995). People's sense of territory and history therefore can be manipulated by the state through the promotion of a map designating national territory with the help of its various institutions including school, media and so forth (Winichakul 1994). In the nationalist imagination, Billig (1995) notes that nations do not shade into each other, but are clearly delimited by their borders. He writes, "Losing a part of the imagined homeland is worse than merely losing an ear: in the case of territory, the lost ear always turns up on someone's else's face. Something beyond utility - some part of 'our' home, 'our' selves - has been illegitimately taken by another" (Billig 1995: 75). Hence, in the modern age, any perception of threat to a country's territorial integrity is met with the eruption of "hot nationalism" among its citizens.

While a map designating bounded territory separates a national unit from other similarly bounded national units in the modern world, a national flag is also a powerful tool in "nation-building and nation-maintenance" (Kolstø 2006: 676). As a condensed symbol of nation (Eriksen 2007b), a national flag plays a key role in subtly reminding people of their national affiliation in various contexts (Billig 1995). Eriksen (2007b) discusses three minimum conditions that must be met for a national flag to be acceptable broadly in a diverse country: i) A flag cannot be the sole basis of national identification. The collective identity of the nation should derive from something else as well, apart from a national flag; ii) A flag should be like an empty vessel that can be filled with a lot of things. In other words, it should be able to accommodate the meanings and interpretations made by diverse people and for that, the flag

should not come across as being associated with particular region, ethnicity, religion and so forth; and iii) Any ambiguity in the flag should disappear at the borders, meaning that it should make clear which side of the border one belongs. For Eriksen, a flag is bound to be disputed if these minimum conditions are not met. Any intentional damage to a flag is often punishable by law in many countries, as there is a perception that such acts threaten the nation and its existence (Jaskulowski 2015). By making any damage or insult to the national flag illegal, Elgenius (2011) argues that states are being more concerned with obviating ideological deviation from official patriotism. However, such acts also encroach on the nationalist sensibilities of many citizens who cherish their flag and thus, often results in the release of hot nationalism, especially in the world of internet and social media.

2.5 Nationalism in the internet

There is a general consensus among scholars that the internet and its various platforms are not free from nationalist assumptions/discourse and that they contribute towards the reproduction of nationalism (Eriksen 2007a; Goldsmith and Wu 2006; Soffer 2013; Szulc 2017; Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez 2021). Nationalism inflects the architecture of internet in various ways including the use of national language, Domain Name System (DNS) that is marked nationally, the nationalistic bias of the internet algorithm and the formation of national digital ecosystems (Soffer 2013; Szulc 2017; Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez 2021). Goldsmith and Wu (2006) write that governments around the world impose national laws on the internet within their territorial borders, which contributes towards further nationalizing internet. Besides the top-down pressures on the internet, Goldsmith and Wu note the presence of bottom-up pressures on the internet from the internet users who demand from the internet operators/content providers to facilitate an internet experience that conforms to their local conditions and preferences. All these factors inherent in the architecture of the internet work towards silently reproducing

nationalism in a banal way. However, as far back as 2007, Eriksen (2007a) also notes that internet has been an instrument of consciously projecting long-distance nationalism in the context of diaspora, which he brands as "internet nationalism." Soffer (2013) writes that discourses of hot nationalism proliferate the internet spheres during the times of social disruption, reflecting the general shift in national media discourse during such times. Evidently, banal and hot varieties of nationalism are both present in the internet.

Importantly, Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez (2021) point out that digital platforms enable people to promote different imaginings of nation but not on the same level playing field. Some people are better-equipped than others to do so, but only within the limits/parameters of the specific digital platforms. The authors also suggest the potential of digital communication infrastructures to fragment and polarize nationalism into extreme types. Owing to the political economy of digital platforms and their profit-making imperatives, they further note, there is a propensity of digital platforms towards commercialization and commodification which, according to them, lead to a "narrow nationalist vision." Existing scholarship has also long criticized the tendency to discuss online dynamics as separately from the offline dynamics, leading to a misleading dichotomization of online spheres and offline spheres (Eklund 2015; Fleig and Scheve 2020; Jordan 2009). Social media platforms have over the years emerged as places where, among others, opinions are exchanged over various issues prevalent in the offline world. One important perspective of public opinion formation, in a general context, is advanced by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974) in her Spiral of Silence theory. Noelle-Neumann underlines the tendency of individuals to refrain from expressing an opinion that potentially diverges from the opinion of the people around them due to the fear of isolation. Through a "quasi-statistical organ", an individual tries to find out the favorability of his opinion "by observing his social environment, by assessing the distribution of opinions for and against his

ideas, but above all by evaluating the strength (commitment), the urgency, and the chances of success of certain proposals and viewpoints" (Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann 1974: 44). This process may not be applicable in anonymous online interactions in certain online platforms, but is certainly applicable in other platforms such as YouTube where anonymity is not necessarily maintained, especially in the genre of YouTube videos called 'reaction videos'.
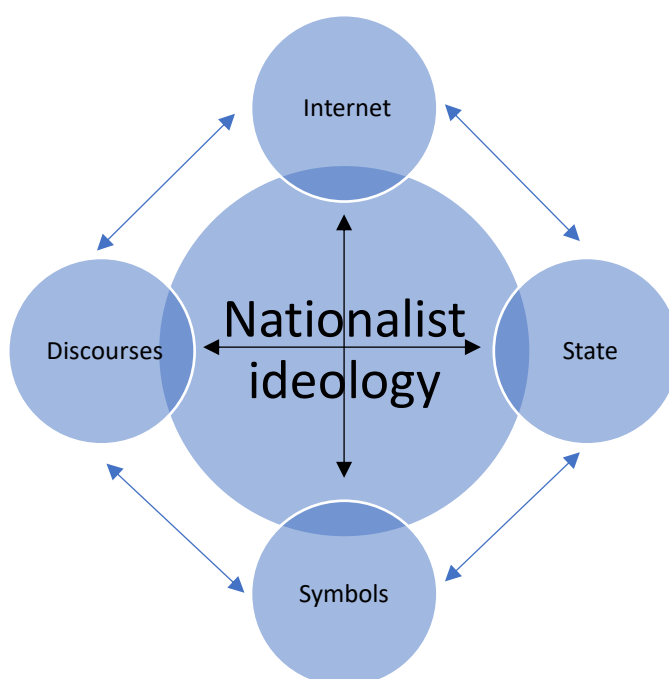
2.6 Summing up

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Introduction

The data for this research constitutes the spoken discourse in the sampled reaction videos publicly available on YouTube. As with other platforms in the internet, nationalist ideology infects the architecture and content of YouTube in many ways - from the algorithm, that sorts out video recommendations including the advertisements to 'nationally-located' consumers, to the languages of the content, which are often the national/dominant languages leading to multilingualism on YouTube. Besides, the available content often reflects the local/national concerns and circumstances. Just as anyone with an access to internet can be a content creator on YouTube after agreeing to follow the basic guidelines of YouTube, anyone using internet can also consume the content publicly available on YouTube. YouTube is certainly a part of the digital technologies that has converted people into 'produsers' and 'prosumers' (Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez 2021). In nationalism scholarship, Hobsbawm (1990) first underlined the importance of bottom-up perspective of ordinary folks in attaining a fuller understanding of nationalism and thereby, noting a possible disjunction between nationalism from the above and nationalism from the below. Though Banal Nationalism thesis by Billig (1995) embodies a top-down perspective rather than a bottom-up one, both Billig (1995) and Hobsbawm (1990), among others, inspired everyday nationalism scholarship that programmatically privileges the bottom-up perspective as well as human agency (Fox 2018; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008; Knott 2015).

I take reaction videos available on YouTube as a source of bottom-up perspective which also captures the agency of the speakers in the reaction videos, even though the agency is exercised

within the structural, ideological, discursive and contextual constraints. Sam Anderson in New York Times writes, "Reaction videos are exactly what they sound like: footage of people reacting to things" (Anderson 2011). According to Vogele, "A reaction video is a recording of an individual reacting to some "outside stimulus," such as a television episode, film trailer, movie clip, and even other YouTube videos" (Vogele 2017: 595). Following Anderson and Vogele, reaction videos may simply be defined as self-recorded videos uploaded on YouTube where individuals react to things in online and/or offline spheres. There can be various types of recorded reactions on various things on YouTube, but I am only interested in the reaction videos made in the immediate aftermath of events that violated national symbols arousing a popular nationalist outburst in the context of Nepal. Hence, the reaction videos considered in this thesis capture the hot variety of nationalism. Hot nationalism may be event-based, but this is still analytically useful, as Bonikowski writes, "for bringing into relief otherwise latent cultural processes" (Bonikowski 2016: 6). Brubaker (1996) notes the importance of eventful perspective in understanding nationness and nationalism highlighting the potentially transformative consequences of events. Hot nationalism not only brings to light what constitutes the banal in banal nationalism, it also provides an opportunity to examine the dynamics between nationalist ideology, national symbols and bottom-up discourses of nationalism. Occasions of hot nationalism may also inject new dynamics in banal nationalism once the temperature of hot nationalism goes down.

3.2 Selection of data

I focus on two events for my research: i) a map-cum-territorial dispute between Nepal and India that emerged in November 2019; and ii) the flag burning Nepali music video that came out in August 2020. The initial pool of my sample consisted of all reaction videos uploaded on YouTube during the same months in which the events in question took place. The first event,

the map-cum-territorial conflict, between Nepal and India was reported in Nepali media in early November. The second event, related to the controversial music video featuring the scene of flag burning, came to public attention in mid-August 2020. However, this original video is no longer available in the singer's YouTube channel where it was first uploaded. However, it has been re-uploaded by other YouTube channels and hence is freely available. I limited my sample timeframe to the same months in which the events took place because if the videos are chosen temporally closer to the events concerned, the chances of them being a reaction to other similar videos rather than the events in question would be less.

After finalizing the initial pool of reaction videos, I selected my sample for this study based on a number of criteria. I made sure the videos considered for each event were of uniform nature. For instance, most of the reaction videos featured only one person. Hence, I didn't select those videos where more than one person appeared. Similarly, some of the videos didn't have a clear beginning and ending, despite being very interesting. However, to ensure uniformity of the videos analyzed, I selected only those reaction videos with clear beginning and ending. Furthermore, as I am just interested in the bottom-up discourse, I did not discriminate between the reaction videos uploaded directly on YouTube by content creators with their own YouTube channels and the ones uploaded on YouTube from other platforms where the speakers themselves might not be active on YouTube. Using these criteria, I managed to select 4 reaction videos in relation to the first event i.e., the territorial/map dispute between Nepal and India in early November 2019. Though I could select more than 4 reaction videos for the second event - the flag burning music video that came out in August 2020 - using the same criteria, I selected only 4 videos out of the available videos to match the number of reaction videos selected as a sample for the first event and also, to prevent my analysis from being tilted towards the second

event. I selected these 4 videos for the second event by ranking the available reaction videos in terms of their number of views and selected the top four.

Event 1	Views	Length	Language	Coded as
1. Reaction video 1	705K+	11:03	Hindi	Map Speaker 1 (MS1)
2. Reaction video 2	138K+	05:46	Hindi	MS2
3. Reaction video 3	19K+	05:21	Nepali	MS3
4. Reaction video 4	5K+	04:19	Nepali	MS4

Event 2	Views	Length	Language	Coded as
1. Reaction video 1	175K+	11:34	Nepali	Flag Speaker 1 (FS1)
2. Reaction video 2	58K+	10:45	Nepali	FS2
3. Reaction video 3	27K+	11:33	Nepali	FS3
4. Reaction video 4	14K+	09:38	Nepali	FS4

3.3 Method of analysis:

I have identified frames used by the speakers in the reaction videos to talk about the concerned events and subsequently, analyzed the framed discourse. According to Goffman (1986), all individuals are endowed with some socially and culturally driven primary frameworks to make sense of events in daily life. He writes, "Primary framework is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful"

(Goffman 1986: 21). This involves assumption and interpretations of what is going on. Goffman further adds, "A correspondence or isomorphism is thus claimed between perception and the organization of what is perceived, in spite of the fact that there are likely to be many valid principles of organization that could but don't inform perception" (Goffman 1986: 26). For Lakoff (2010), frames are grounded in the human cognition itself and thus, inherent to all thinking and talking. Explaining the implication of frames, Ribeiro and Hoyle write, "Frames affect the way in which we categorize, remember, and revise what we know, as well as what we say, how we mean it, how others hear it, and how we do things together linguistically and otherwise " (Ribeiro and Hoyle 2009: 74).

Scholars of nationalism have argued that the dominant cognitive framework to understand social reality in the modern era is the national framework (Billig 1995; Malesevic 2019; Skey 2011). This doesn't mean that ordinary people routinely talk about the nation, but what they rather do is they talk with the nation. In other words, the category of 'nation' informs the way they see, talk, do and act in a subconscious way, without being the object of the talk itself (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). However, people employ explicitly national frames only in certain contexts. Hence, the attention of an analyst should also go towards exploring "when is the nation" as suggested by Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008). Events that directly violate national symbols in particular do not fail to evoke national frames among many citizens. Such events result in, as Brubaker writes, "the nationalization of narrative and interpretative frames, of perception and evaluation, of thinking and feeling ... the silencing or marginalization of alternative, non-nationalist political languages ... the nullification of complex identities by the terrible categorical simplicity of ascribed nationality" (Brubaker 1996: 20). Considering these insights, analysis of frames and discourse used by ordinary people during such period can give an interesting and important insight into hot nationalism from the bottom-up.

A frame is not an ideology nor are frames synonymous to discourses. Ideology works as a constraint as well as resource for framing processes (Benford and Snow 2000). Similarly, the existing discourses also constrain the framing possibilities (Hall 1992; Mills et al. 2010). According to Lakoff (2010), frames exist in systems and an ideology has its own system of frames that gets activated when one is exposed to ideological language. According to him, frames exist in systems and an ideology has its own system of frames that gets activated when one is exposed to ideological language. He writes, "... the repetition of ideological language will strengthen the circuits for that ideology in a hearer's brain ... ideological language repeated often enough can become "normal language" but still activate that ideology unconsciously in the brains of citizens - and journalists" (Lakoff 2010: 72). However, it is the discourses that get framed (Mills et al. 2010), which then express the underlying ideology (Van Dijk 2013). The frames used by the speakers in the YouTube reaction videos are no less constrained and defined by the nationalist ideology and discourses of nationalism. After finalizing my sample for analysis, I transcribed the speeches of the speakers in all the videos to carefully analyze the bottom-up discourse in the reaction videos. Through this process, I came up with a number of frames by identifying the central assumptions and claims in their discourse. I further narrowed down to a few broad frames. As I confined the scope of this research to the spoken discourse in the reaction videos, I have not examined the comments and thereby, the consumption aspect of the reaction videos on YouTube.

Chapter 4: Nepal's Geo-Body and its Violation

4.1 Introduction

The independence of India in 1947 from the British rule was a watershed in the history of the region. The event led to a truncated India following Pakistan's secession to form a different country, ostensibly for the Muslims in the region. Moreover, the leadership was faced with a security challenge from a geopolitical perspective with the existence of neighbors, thought to be hostile to India's interests as well as its territoriality, such as Pakistan and China in the neighborhood. Nepal and India, though often celebrated as countries sharing deep historical, cultural and fraternal ties, have several disputed territories along the borders which have been a sore in the relationship between the two countries since a long time that occasionally flares up into a nationalist outburst, especially in Nepal for Nepal sees India not only as a friendly country but also as a potential threat to its geo-body given the asymmetry in the size of the two neighboring countries. Out of 77 districts of Nepal, 27 of them have connections to India and among these 27 districts, 24 have territorial disputes with India (Shrestha 2022). One of the major territorial disputes between the two countries has been in the Kalapani region which Nepal considers as a part of its Darchula district in the Far West Nepal. However, the disputed Kalapani has been administered by the Uttrakhand state of India as a part of its Pithoragarh district since Sino-Indian War 1962, when Nepal was ruled an autocratic monarchial regime that favored to ignore the Kalapani issue to curry favour with India (Dixit and Dhakal 2020).[5]

This chapter is concerned with the territorial dispute, that culminated in an unprecedented map dispute, between Nepal and India originating in November 2019 over a strip of land, a tri-

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[5] Due to its strategic location in the high Himalayas, India established an army post in Kalapani in keeping with its security needs and concerns with regard to China. Following the coming of democracy in Nepal in the 1990s, the issue of Kalapani was raised again and has been present in the nationalist discourse ever since as a symbol of India's expansionism. Kalapani has now become a shorthand for Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipu Lekh that together form a small imperfectly formed triangle in Nepal's northwestern corner.

junction, consisting of Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipu Lekh located in Nepal's northwest corner - a strategic area in the high Himalayas linking Nepal, India and China. The focus of the paper however is the Nepali nationalist reactions to the dispute in the internet, particularly in the reaction videos uploaded on YouTube in the month of November. I show how the speakers in the reaction videos use national frames in their discourse with a seemingly clear notion of 'us' and 'them'. This is particularly evident in the way their discourse varies when addressing Nepali audience and Indian audience respectively in line with the nationalist ideology that characterizes the world as divided into discrete nations with clear territorial boundaries. These territorial boundaries are thought to enclose not only sovereign territories, but also culture, languages and ways of life and thereby, making one nation fundamentally different than the other. A national symbol such as a country's map contributes towards promoting this imagination of the world. I argue that India's perceived violation of Nepal's geo-body in the form of map constituted a harsher offence to Nepali nationalist sensibilities than its actual control of a remote disputed territory. This demonstrates the symbolic power of map and the technology of mapping in today's times.

4.2 Framing Nepal-India map-cum-territorial dispute of November 2019

The territorial dispute of November 2019 was in effect a map dispute that stretched on for months without resolution. In early November, India updated its political map to reflect the recent internal administrative changes that took place within India (Giri 2019). The new map included a disputed territory, namely Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipu Lekh which Nepal claims as its own (Ibid. 2019). According to the aforementioned Treaty of Sugauli 1816, the western frontier of Nepal is the Mahakali River and the territories lying in the east of the Mahakali River belongs to Nepal. Article 5 of the treaty says, "The Rajah of Nipal renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to or connection with the countries lying to the

west of the River Kali, and engages never to have any concern with those countries or the inhabitants thereof" (Stiller 2018: 25). Here, 'The Rajah of Nipal' refers to the King of Nepal and the 'River Kali' refers to the Mahakali River. The bone of contention is the origin of the River Kali or the Mahakali River as the treaty is silent about it. Nepal maintains that the boundary line should be determined at the source of Mahakali River which has been identified by the Nepali side as Limpiyadhura, and backs it up by citing several historical maps produced between 1820s to 1860 by the British (Shrestha 2022). On this basis, Nepal considers Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipu Lekh as its integral parts lying in the east of the Mahakali River in the spirit of the Treaty of Sugauli. Until recently, this was not reflected in Nepal's own official map given the disputed status of the territory. Hence, generations of Nepalis grew up without seeing the disputed territory on the country's map, though the territorial claim has been in the public narratives since long.

The news of India's inclusion of the disputed territory in its map immediately evoked a nationalist outcry across Nepal. Protesting India's move, Nepal officially sent a diplomatic note to the Government of India on 20th November 2019. Meanwhile, protests against India amplified over the days. In a protest near the Embassy of India in Kathmandu, a group of Nepali students burned the map of India and the papers containing protest slogans attached to their chest read, "Return all encroached Nepali territory", "Our motherland is dearer than our lives" and "Down with Indian expansionism" (Al Jazeera 2019). Apart from the streets, the bottom-up nationalist discourse proliferated across the social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Among these social media platforms, an interesting nationalist discourse that emerged was on YouTube in the form of reaction videos, though such videos also appeared on Facebook in the form of Facebook Live. However, the genre of reaction videos first began on YouTube, and popular Facebook Live videos are often uploaded on YouTube as well. An

insight into this hot nationalism can be gained by analyzing the frames and discourse of the speakers in the reaction videos. The four speakers in the reaction videos analyzed herein are categorized as MS1 (Map Speaker 1), MS2, MS3 and MS4, with MS1 being the speaker in the reaction video with the highest views and MS4 being the speaker in the reaction video with the lowest views. The three frames identified in their reaction videos are: i) Responsibility frame; ii) Reciprocity frame and iii) Justice frame.

4.2.1 Responsibility frame

Under the responsibility frame, I have included the elements of the speakers' discourse which attribute blame to particular actors in relation to the map-cum-territorial dispute. All the four speakers in the reaction videos use responsibility frame. However, not all of them uses the frame in the same way. While there is no confusion that India is at fault in their perception, they identify different actors as being responsible for the issue at the borders. MS1, for instance, discursively separate Indian people from Indian government and media. He charges Indian government and media as the culprits, and declares the innocence of Indian public. He therefore finds it important to communicate to the Indian public directly to clear the confusion and hence, speaks in Hindi, a dominant language in India, rather than Nepali. He frames Indian people as the victim of the propaganda perpetuated by the Indian government and media. As a result, they are presumably misinformed about the rightful territorial claims of Nepal. The government and media, he says, have not shown the public the right maps made by the British adding that there has also been territorial encroachment of Nepali territory by India in other parts of the border - for which the Indian armed border force, also known by the acronym 'SSB' (Seema Surakchya Bal), is complicit.

MS1: There is no fault of Indian public in this, but your media and your government have spread propaganda. They have kept you in the dark. Our 126 [border] pillars have disappeared. This is not the issue of Kalapani only. Our 126 pillars have disappeared. They have not been eaten up by the land. They have not been swallowed up by the sky. Your SSB's soldiers come over under the cover of the night and take out the pillars. Suddenly, the land that was in Nepal during the night becomes Indian in the morning. This way, miracle happens. And, our border gets encroached by your people and by your government.[6]

MS2 also uses Hindi rather than Nepali in his reaction video. However, he addresses Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, directly in his reaction video in a confrontational manner. He unequivocally blames Modi for the encroachment of Nepali territory, not the impersonal Indian government, media and security force as in the case of MS1. Both MS3 and MS4, however, speak less about India and more about the domestic weaknesses in Nepali language, seemingly targeting the Nepali audience. In a poetic satirical manner, MS3 blames the politicians and people of Nepal themselves for they have not been sincere enough towards their own country and people. He criticizes the lack of unity and bonhomie among Nepalis and their susceptibility to petty political manipulations. He scoffs at the tendency of some Nepali politicians to supplicate before India to serve their narrow interests. Interestingly, he also takes a dig at all the reaction videos made by Nepalis across social media platforms in the wake of the territorial/map dispute and calls into question their seriousness.

MS3: However much India gets angry, I don't care. Because Nepal has now best of the best comedians in social media - sometime they claim India to be a part of Nepal,

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[6] Translated from Hindi by the author.

sometime they show a naked *khukuri* [Nepali knife] pretending to be Bhakti Thapa, Balabhadra and Amir Singh Thapa. The funny thing is that whoever has applied for DV [Diversity Visa of the US] this time, has the loudest talk about border and nationalism.[7]

MS4 attributes blame to Nepali politicians and Nepal army. According to him, Nepali leaders have not been patriotic enough and had they got the wisdom to act in the interest of the country in time, the border would not have been transgressed by India and Nepali people would not have to rise up in protest. He also faults Nepal army for not doing its part properly to secure the border. For him, Nepal army has been passive and subordinate to the political leadership even in the matters of national security. Nepali army, according to him, should be accountable to the people and country.

4.2.2 Reciprocity frame

Reciprocity frame focuses on reciprocity or lack thereof between Nepal and India. The reciprocity frame identified in the reaction videos highlight the goodness of Nepal towards India and lack of reciprocity on the part of the latter. Interestingly, reciprocity frame is missing in the discourse of MS3 and MS4 who speak in Nepali language and seem to address the Nepali audience in their videos. Both MS1 and MS2, who speak in Hindi and address the Indian audience, unmistakably use the reciprocity frame. They use the reciprocity frame to highlight the ungrateful behavior of the Indian state. They point out the practice of India's recruitment of Nepali soldiers as Gorkhas in the Indian army - an inheritance from the British rule in India.[8]

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[7] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[8] The British recruitment of soldiers from Nepal, also known as Gurkhas, started in 1815, even before the formal conclusion of the Sugauli Treaty in 1816 that put an end to the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814. In 1947 with the independence of India from the British rule, Nepal, India and Britain signed a tripartite agreement that enabled the recruitment of Nepalis in the British army and the Indian army separately from then onwards.

In this context, MS1 argues that India is not treating Nepal in a reciprocal manner, though Nepalis have sacrificed their lives for the Indian cause. He therefore maintains, it is impossible that Nepal could ever be anti-India. MS2 challenges the Prime Minister of India to remove the 'brave' Nepali soldiers (Gorkhas) from India. Doing so, he claims, will bring Indian territory under Pakistan's occupation. In this way, S1 and S2 emphasize how Nepal has in fact contributed to securing the borders of India.

> MS1: If one flips through the pages of history, we have fought in your every war. You have captured the territory of those people who have safeguarded your borders by giving up of their own lives. We were never anti-Indian, but your government has done an anti-Nepal act.[9]
>
> MS2: Just remove Nepali brave Gorkha soldiers from there, Pakistan will cut India in 24 pieces in 24 hours.[10]

S1 maintains that it is unfair on the part of India to meddle in the domestic affairs of Nepal. He illustrates the lack of reciprocal approach of India towards Nepal by drawing contrasting cases of two identity movements: Madheshi movement in Nepal and Gorkhaland movement in India. Madheshi movement is the identity-centered movement of Madheshi people living in the southern region of Nepal who share familial, social and linguistic ties with people across the border in India (Gill and Paswan 2017). Gorkhaland movement is an identity-centered statehood movement of Indian citizens of Nepali origin living in the northernmost district of the West Bengal state of India adjoining Nepal (Gurung 2018). He criticizes India for acting on behalf of the Madhes movement back in 2015 by imposing an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal and causing untold sufferings to common Nepalis, whereas Nepal itself has never

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[9] Translated from Hindi by the author.
[10] Translated from Hindi by the author.

interfered in the Gorkhaland movement of India respecting that it is the internal matter of India. He, furthermore, points out the controversial issue of National Registry of Citizens (NRC) that aims to document all citizens of India across the country. He claims that the NRC can affect the citizenship status of many Indians of Nepali origin, yet Nepal has not raised any objection to it considering this an internal matter of India. Despite Nepal's respect towards India, he says, India has not respected Nepali people, Nepal's sovereignty and Nepalis' love for their territory.

4.2.3 Justice frame

Justice frame brings into focus the perceived injustice faced by Nepal at the hands of India and the action to be taken by Nepal. MS1, MS3 and MS4 highlight the injustice and action to be taken by Nepal whereas MS2 only focuses on injustice. MS2 mentions that he used to think of Narendra Modi as a big brother, but not anymore as he is now a land thief in his eyes. For him, it is shameful for India to steal the land of a small country such as Nepal despite being such a big country with a huge population. MS1 reminds his audience that Nepal and India may have asymmetrical sizes, but the two countries are equal in the international community. He also brings up India's colonized past and suggests that India itself has a "colonization mindset" and behaves like its former colonizer towards Nepal. He warns India not to assume that Nepalis will just tolerate and not fight back.

> S1: We are Gorkhas. Fighting is in our blood. We are not cowards. We will take back Kalapani anyhow. You have to leave the place.[11]

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[11] Translated from Hindi by the author.

MS2 declares that he is not afraid of dying for the country. MS3 suggests not to waste any more time by just worrying and talking in the social media. He calls for a march to the occupied territory and urges his audience not to stay silent until the occupied territory is gained back. Otherwise, the very existence of the country will come under threat. The same worry is also expressed by MS4 and remind his audience that such events have taken place in history, presumably in other parts of the world. For MS3 and MS4, the loss of Nepal would mean the loss of Nepali identity. MS4 sees a way out in the effective mobilization of Nepali army in the borders. He declares that Nepalis are ready to materially support the Nepal army even if it requires them to go hungry.

> MS4: If we make our country's border security strong, the country will be strong. If the country is strong, people there will be strong.[12]

MS1 expresses his hope the situation will get better gradually between the two close neighbors and Nepal won't be forced to go to the international court.

4.3 Discussion

The three frames (Responsibility frame, Reciprocity frame and Justice frame) identified in the speakers' discourse in the reaction videos shed light on the external dimension of Nepali nationalism. Externally, Nepali nationalism has been defined against India, as Nepal is economically, culturally and geographically more integrated with India than with Nepal's northern neighbor China. India, therefore, presents an existential threat in Nepali nationalist imagination. Nepali nationalism thus emphasizes differences with India. The event that

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[12] Translated from Nepali by the author.

activated the frames in the reaction videos was the media reports of India's inclusion of Nepal's long claimed territory in the former's updated map. The consequent outburst of nationalism in Nepal, an instance of what Billig (1995) calls "hot nationalism", demonstrates the centrality of map in the territorial imagination of citizens. This is more so because the territory in question was already long beyond the administrative control of the Nepali state, a fact that is not unknown to Nepalis. Yet, the anger expressed by people in the major cities across the country over the news indicates the strength of nationalist ideology in public consciousness, which cherishes the national symbols such as a map and projects ownership of places that many citizens themselves have no connection with. Billig writes, "They can even be tourists, indeed strangers, in parts of 'their' own land; yet, it is still 'their' land" (Billig 1995: 74).

As demonstrated by the bottom-up discourse in the reaction videos, the event of map-cum-territorial dispute doesn't lead to a wholesale demonization of the Other and glorification of Us. The responsibility frame makes it evident that the speakers in the reaction videos hold both the internal and external actors as responsible for the event. This shows that nationalist ideology is not just about the state suppressing citizens to the point of them being completely uncritical about their nation and the state. Rather, from the bottom-up, the tenets of nationalist ideology turn into some kind of barometer to assess the performances and loyalty of the state actors as well as fellow citizens. Interestingly, the internal criticisms are reserved for Nepali audience and criticisms of India are directed at the targeted Indian audience who are presumed to be unaware of the facts. The speakers use Hindi language to reach out to the Indian audience and Nepali language to address the Nepali audience. This affirms the dominant status of these languages in the respective countries. MS1 and MS2, speaking in Hindi addressing Indian audience, attribute blame to Indian government, Indian media and the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, while offering no internal criticism. MS3 and MS4, speaking in Nepali

language and addressing Nepali audience, criticize Nepali politicians, Nepali people and Nepali army for their deficiencies and lack of nationalism while offering no extensive criticism of India. The speakers in the reaction videos thus uphold the nationalist dictum that one criticizes their country only among their own people and not with foreigners.

The above-mentioned tendency is also evident in the speakers' use of reciprocity frame or lack thereof. MS1 and MS2, whose target audience is Indian, use the reciprocity frame to essentially highlight the contributions that Nepal has made to India and at the same time, emphasize the lack of reciprocity on the part of India as well as their ungrateful and unfair behavior towards Nepal. They particularly flag Nepal's contribution to India's national security by allowing the latter to recruit soldiers from Nepal, who have bravely fought in India's wars. The trope of bravery of Nepalis has been a part of the discourse of Nepali state nationalism since the mid-twentieth century (Onta 1996). MS3 and MS4, whose audience is Indian, do not use the reciprocity frame at all. The absence may be explained by the fact that MS3 and MS4 do not find it necessary to remind Nepali audience what Nepal has done for India or how India has unfairly treated Nepal. What is perhaps more urgent is to remind domestic audience of their moral failing to defend Nepal. Using the justice frame, the speakers discuss the action that they are prepared to do to end the issue. Using the trope of Nepalis' bravery, they express their eagerness to fight for the country, support the Nepali military materially and even go to the international court to seek justice. The following remark by MS4 is particularly telling of the border-consciousness in nationalist thinking: "If we make our country's border security strong, the country will be strong. If the country is strong, people there will be strong."

Indeed, the clear distinction between 'Us' and 'Them' that has figured in the discourse of the speakers in the reaction videos has a basis in the territorial imagination of nation, what

Thongchai (1994, 1996) calls 'geo-body'. The concept of 'geo-body' by Thongchai Winichakul marries two crucial blocks of the imagination of national space: territory and mapping (Winichakul 1994, 1996). A map is a product of modern geographical knowledge. A national map delineates a country's sovereign territory and facilitates the formation of 'geo-body' of a nation, a collective self for the people of a nation. If the state has a monopoly of violence, they also have a monopoly of modern geographical knowledge in delineating the national sovereign territory. For Thongchai, geo-body is easily naturalized in the imagination of a nation for its material basis is the surface of the earth and by the extension, the soil. "A modern nation-state", writes Winichakul, "must be imaginable in mapped form ... disconnected, disjoined or overlapping boundaries are unthinkable and unacceptable. They must be changed" (Winichakul 1996: 76). While India has long controlled the territory under dispute, they have now reflected this fact in the map as well. Though generations of Nepalis grew up without seeing the claimed territory in their own country's map, the news of India's inclusion of the territory in its map stoked hot nationalism immediately. This latter development has conceivably turned out to be more offensive to the Nepali nationalist sensibilities, which reflects the symbolic power of the map and the geo-body. This is evident by how, under heavy domestic pressure, Nepal retaliated to India's move by coming up with its own new map showing the disputed territory within its borders in May 2022, six months after India released its new map (Post Report 2020). India's map created a sense of urgency among Nepalis which was also visible in the discourse in the reaction videos where the speakers are seen urging Nepalis to fight back and secure the border - failing to do so, can threaten the very existence of the country.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter examined the frames and discourse of the speakers in four reaction videos that were uploaded on YouTube in the wake of Nepal-India map-cum-territorial dispute of early

November 2019. The frames identified are: i) Responsibility frame; ii) Reciprocity frame and iii) Justice frame. In reacting to the event, the analysis reveals that the speakers use frames taking the existence of discrete territorial nations for granted. It further reveals that there is no just one discourse of nationalism that flows from the state only to be replicated by the citizens as it is. The nationalist ideology, that informs the cognitive framework of the speakers, also serves as a barometer to assess the performances and loyalty of Nepali politicians and people. When addressing the Nepali audience, the speakers' discourse becomes critical towards a range of Nepali actors including ordinary Nepalis whereas when addressing the Indian audience, the discourse changes towards being critical of India rather than Nepal. The inclusion of Nepal's long claimed territory in the Indian map turned out to be a strong offence to Nepali nationalist sensibilities, even though the territory in question was not included in Nepal's map and has been under the control of India since the 1960s. The resulting hot nationalism reinforces the Nepali state nationalism ideologically. This shows the symbolic power of map and the geo-body that the technology of mapping produces.

Chapter 5: Nepal's Flag and its Violation

5.1 Introduction

In mid-August 2020, a young political activist, who also identifies as a rapper going by the stage name of "Mongol Gyalz Lee", suddenly came in the spotlight due to his YouTube-uploaded rap song titled *Deshdrohi* (Traitor). This song immediately courted controversy in social media because of its lyrical content and most prominently, due to the national flag burning scene featured in the music video of the song.[13] Written as a rap song, the lyrics presents a revisionist narrative of Nepali history advanced by the most radical in the ethnic movement in Nepal (Hangen 2001). The song projects the politically dominant Bahun and Chettri communities, two so-called high-caste Hindu groups, as refugees who escaped to Nepal following their expulsion by Muslim rulers in India. It then goes on to narrate, among others, how these "refugees" subsequently divided the non-Hindu *mulbasi* (main residents or natives) into various categories to subjugate them and eventually imposed the former's culture, language and religion on the latter.

This chapter explores the nationalist reactions to the YouTube-uploaded music video featuring the scene of flag burning, which made the music video controversial and, in the parlance of social media, "viral". Based on the analysis of the frames and discourse used by the speakers in the four selected YouTube reaction videos uploaded in the month of August, I argue that the burning of the national flag encroached on the nationalist sensibilities of the speakers in the

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[13] The National Penal (Code) Act 2017 considers any act of dishonoring the flag of Nepal an offence punishable by imprisonment up to three years and/or a fine up to Rs. 30,000. It also penalizes any act that harms the relations between different communities in the country with up to five years imprisonment and a fine not more than Rs. 50,000 if considered under "the offence against the state" and up to one year imprisonment and a fine not more than Rs. 10,000 if considered under "the offence against public tranquility". Mongol Gyalz Lee and his crew were arrested shortly after the controversy broke out. Though the details of the legal case didn't come out in the media, the rapper himself spent close to six months in prison before being released.

reaction videos on YouTube more obviously and strikingly than the actual discourse of the song.[14] This is particularly evident in the speakers' ignorance of the pre-existing discourse and politics advanced by the song, thus ensuring their inability to critically engage with and tackle the various claims made in the song. This is an unmistakable sign of the national flag being perceived as an embodiment of the nation in the nationalist imagination. Unlike the map issue where most Nepalis conceivably share the same ground, the radical ethnic discourse and the flag controversy constitute a domestic issue with multiple stakeholders within the country. I tentatively explain the overwhelming opposition to the song and its music video including the flag burning scene in all the reaction videos with the reference to the Spiral of Silence theory.

5.2 Framing the song *deshdrohi* and its controversial music video of August 2019

It is evident in the music video that the rapper is a follower of Gopal Gurung (1939-2016), the founder of Mongol National Organization (MNO), an ethnic political party established in 1989.[15] The music video features not only the portrait of Gopal Gurung in the background in some scenes, but the rapper can be seen wearing a string of beads around his neck and a locket dangling from it with a photo of Gopal Gurung. Gurung founded MNO with an aim to restructure the state radically in a way that empowers the native non-Hindu "Mongols" who, according to the party ideology, have long been marginalized and dominated by the non-native high-caste Hindus referred to as "Hindu Aryans" (Hangen 2010). MNO ideology insists that the natives of Nepal were historically non-Hindus and it is important for them to know their "true history" (Hangen 2013). It also sees the national flag as an ethnoreligious symbol deriving

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[14] In the immediate wake of the controversy, it was the burning of the national flag that came into the public discussion prominently. A few early media reports about the controversy underplayed the content of the song and rather, emphasized the flag burning incident in the music video. In an interview given prior to his arrest, the rapper himself acknowledged that the flag burning issue became much more controversial than the song itself.

[15] The rapper has clarified that the music video was not made with a prior approval of Mongol National Organization (MNO). He claims he was formerly a part of MNO, but had severed his formal ties with the organization well before the making of the music video. He calls himself a supporter of MNO nonetheless.

from Hinduism and demands the change of the national flag on this ground. The website of MNO showcases the proposed national of Nepal. In contrast to the ethno-cultural and sociologically-informed discourse advanced by the mainstream ethnic movement in Nepal, this fringe party advances a race discourse to place different ethnic groups in oppositional categories of "Hindu Aryan" and non-Hindu "Mongol": the former as an exploiter and the latter as exploited (Hangen 2005). The name of the party (Mongol National Organization) itself reflects its racial orientation and it aims to mobilize disparate non-Hindu ethnic groups under a shared identity of being "Mongol". Gopal Gurung, in his controversial self-published book, clarifies that Mongols are not to be confused with people from Mongolia and claims that there are three races of human kind: i) Mongol, ii) Negroid and iii) Aryan (Gurung 1994). He then refers to the dominant groups in Nepal as "black Aryans" who are in opposition to the "Mongols" (Ibid. 1994).

The music video in question starts from a short extract from one of Gopal Gurung's speeches where he can be heard branding the high-caste Hindus as "beggar" and "looter". He then exhorts his audience, presumably "Mongols", to recognize the predatory nature of the high-caste Hindus and gradually evict them from the country. This extremist speech at the beginning frames the entire song and in forty seconds into the song, the rapper is seen setting fire to the national flag. Not only the song reproduces the MNO narratives, it also makes the narratives more dramatic through its confrontational style. Wearing the national flag on his chest, the rapper makes fun of its triangular shape and compares it to a brassiere. He also gives a kick to the Dhaka topi, a traditional cap long promoted by the erstwhile Monarchial Hindu regime as a part of the national dress to be worn by Nepali men, and compares it to a male contraceptive device. In place of Hinduism, the music video promotes Buddhism and the rapper is seen carrying the flag of Buddhism in his hand. Apart from the flag burning, the video also shows

people burning the pictures of major "non-Mongol" politicians of Nepal including King Prithivi Narayan Shah, who is credited to have founded Nepal. Towards the end, the song warns the dominant groups of expulsion and suggests that the only way out would be to apologize to the natives and embrace the path of "Mongol nationalism". The speakers in the four selected reaction videos adopt similar discursive frames when responding to the music videos. I have coded them as FS1 (Flag Speaker 1), FS2, FS3 and FS4 - with FS1 having the highest number of views and FS4 the lowest. The three main frames identified in the reaction videos are: i) Legitimacy frame; ii) Ignorance frame and iii) Implication frame.

5.2.1 Legitimacy frame

There are two ways in which the legitimacy frame has figured in the speakers' discourse: first, to highlight their own legitimate anger and disappointment at the song and its music video and second, to point out the illegitimate anger of the rapper expressed in the song and its music video. In the first sense, all the four speakers in the reaction videos express their supposedly rightful opposition to the position taken by the rapper. The opposition by FS1, FS2 and FS4 is mainly triggered by the flag burning scene in the song. FS1 expresses anger not only over the flag burning scene, but also over the rapper's insult to the *Dhaka topi* (a cap, formerly an essential part of Nepali national costume for men). FS4 adds that his anger over the flag burning act is most likely shared by all Nepalis. FS2 expresses more disappointment than anger. FS3 recognizes the right of the rapper to burn the national flag in an ideal democracy. He, however, opposes the act mainly because he personally dislikes it.

FS1: Since you have burned the flag, you should have also doused yourself with kerosine and burned yourself. The country would have one less bastard ... Now he is kicking Dhaka topi ... his leg should rot. I swear it should rot.[16]

FS2: When they started to burn the flag in the beginning, I lost my vibe ... it ruined my mood, ruined my day.[17]

FS4: Seeing that music video extremely pissed me off. Not only me, I think all Nepalis probably got angry. When one Nepali burns the flag of Nepal like that, it obviously angers everyone ... and I get extremely angry when the country is disrespected.[18]

FS3: I don't think it is good to burn flag, but it should not be that problematic if we go by the definition of democracy. But personally, I don't really like the act of flag burning.[19]

The second way in which the legitimacy frame has been used by the speakers in the reaction videos is to express illegitimacy of the anger and thoughts of the rapper. Whatever might have irked him, the speakers in the reaction video insist that the rapper's expression is essentially illegitimate. FS1 says that if the rapper is so angry with his country, he should have simply left the country. He adds that he himself and others also sometime feel angry towards the country, but they don't go about burning the flag of the country and kicking the Dhaka *topi*. Reacting to the song's reference to the need of apology on the part of the "non-Mongols" to the Mongols,

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[16] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[17] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[18] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[19] Translated from Nepali by the author.

FS2 suggests that it is the rapper who owes an apology. FS3 shares that the rapper should not have violated the law. For FS4, however, the problem extends beyond the realm of law. He asserts that the rapper is also morally wrong.

> FS1: Even before the start of this song, there is a big irony in the name of the song (traitor) ... this brother, who has made this song, has dedicated this song to himself ... If he is that angry with this country, he should have left the country ... we also sometime get angry with our country, seeing the condition of our country. But have we ever burned the flag, kicked Dhaka *topi*? (We) have not. This is because anger and nationalism have their own places. One should know the difference (between the two).[20]

> FS2: Apologize? Who should apologize? After watching this video, who has to apologize everyone knows that.[21]

> FS3: Oh! I too was left dismayed after having watched that video. These guys have a good deal of anger ... Whatever you say, whatever you do, at least it would have been better to stay within the bounds of law.[22]

> FS4: Whatever is said in this video, whatever is shown in this video, that's morally and legally wrong. Morally too, because people normally don't do this.[23]

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[20] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[21] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[22] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[23] Translated from Nepali by the author.

5.2.2 Ignorance frame

The ignorance frame has also been used by the speakers in the reaction videos in two ways: first, to admit their own ignorance of the motivation and meaning of the controversial song and second, to highlight the ignorance of the rapper and the people involved in the making of the music video. In the first sense, FS1, FS2 and FS4 express their inability to understand the lyrics of the rap song and its motivation. FS3, on the other hand, expresses his curiosity regarding the source of the anger expressed by people in the music video. Overall, the reactions of the speakers in their videos also make it apparent that they are not really aware of the pre-existing politics and discourses that the song builds upon and advances.

> FS1: If he is the only one to understand it, why to make this song only to go to jail pointlessly ... What type of person is this? What is his aim? Neither he supports the king nor the politicians as you can see that he has put the photos of the king and the politicians in the effigy. What is he trying to do?[24]
>
> FS2: Is it me who has not understood? What is he trying to do? If you have understood, please go to the comment section and write. I am not able to understand (it) at all. I am getting confused.[25]

> FS3: I was wondering where that anger came from.[26]

[24] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[25] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[26] Translated from Nepali by the author.

FS4: I have not understood quite a few things that he has spoken ... he should not have disrespected the country this way. What did he think before doing this? What expectation did he have?[27]

The second way in which the ignorance frame is explicit is when FS1 and FS3 in their reaction videos highlight the ignorance of the rapper and the people involved in the making of the music video. None of the speakers really analyze the lyrics of the song which advances a revisionist narrative of history. All of them, however, react to certain words and phrases of the song with clear disapproval. Based on their limited understanding of the lyrics, FS1 and FS3 in particular reject some of the claims made by the rapper based on their personal feelings and opinions. In so doing, they project the rapper and those associated with him as essentially ignorant. FS1 questions the sanity of the rapper and claims that he has no knowledge of the country. He further suggests that the rapper is potentially out of touch with reality. FS3, on the other hand, attributes the rapper's and his associates' dissent to the influence of Gopal Gurung as well as their lack of sufficient education.

FS1: I feel that he is probably the number one among mad people ... He has no knowledge of this country. He probably has no idea what is going on in the country.[28]

FS3: If someone keeps the photo of a recently deceased old man in his locket, that's what religion is ... how can we deify just anyone? ... please we should collect a fund and send all these people in this video to school for once and then, we will be in a better world. This all happened because of insufficient education.[29]

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[27] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[28] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[29] Translated from Nepali by the author.

5.2.3 Implication frame

Implication frame has been used to discuss the potential impacts of the song and its music video broadly. It is evident in all the four reaction videos. The four speakers in the reaction videos agree that the song serves to or intends to sow division and discord among people in Nepal by spreading hatred. FS2 expresses worry that the song might have a negative influence on other people. He points out the need to think forward and let go of the past. FS1 and FS3 claim that people are not likely to fall prey to the song because most of them are not as ignorant. FS1 says that ordinary people actually have no time to fight over ethnic issues as they have more pressing concerns in life in today's modern time. FS3, on the other hand, suggests that people will not agree with the rapper's position because they intuitively know that hate is bad. For FS4, the song has also affected the reputation of rap music - which is already a misunderstood genre in Nepal.

> FS2: By going that path regarding one's own flag, what do people see and learn from this? Those who follow Mongol Hop and his crew, will they not learn the same thing? ... the song should project a good message ... Whatever happened in the past, happened already. If we keep digging that, we cannot move ahead.[30]

> FS1: In today's (modern) time, is it worthwhile to raise a dispute by bringing up the topic of ethnicity? To be serious ... who has time to go about quarreling over ethnic issue.[31]

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[30] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[31] Translated from Nepali by the author.

FS3: Why to burn the flag? That is only to show hate. Even a stupid person knows that hate is bad.[32]

FS4: When our parents, elders listen to this kind of songs, they will think that rap (genre) itself is like that ... saying bad things about the country, saying bad things by one ethnic group to another, saying bad things about religion. This is the impression of rap they will have on their minds.[33]

5.3 Discussion

The case analyzed in this chapter captures the interplay between the state-framed nationalism and counter-state nationalism (Brubaker 1998). Nepali national flag certainly belongs to the arena of state-framed nationalism in the sense that it is the state that selects and endorses national symbols such as a national flag. The state, moreover, creates and enforces elaborate rules in the usage and disposal of the flag in an attempt to protect it from abuse and sanctify it in public imagination (Billig 1995; Elgenius 2011; Weitman 1973). This automatically makes the national flag amenable to desecration in the hands of the actors who wish to offend the state. However, it is arguably true that the flag-related laws are concerned less with the prevention of desecration and more with the prevention of ideological deviation from the official patriotism (Elgenius 2011). This official patriotism, i.e., the state-framed nationalism is not necessarily civic, it can also be infused with distinct ethno-religious content (Brubaker 1998). The instance of Nepali national flag burning discussed in this chapter may also be understood in this context, for it is seen as an ethno-religious symbol by its desecrator. For him, it is not an anti-national

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[32] Translated from Nepali by the author.
[33] Translated from Nepali by the author.

act to burn the supposedly unrepresentative flag of Nepal. Rather, in his view, the *deshdrohis* (traitors), as flagged in the title of the song, are the rulers from the dominant groups. Ideology, such as the nationalist ideology, also defines resistance and opposition to it (Van Dijk 2006). The frames based on resistance are also shaped by ideology (Benford and Snow 2000). As Brubaker (2004) reminds us, attempts at redefining the nation can also be made in the name of nation.

The speakers in the reaction videos, however, clearly do not share the same view as the rapper. Two speakers are from the Bahun caste group, which is one of the high-caste Hindu groups denounced in the song as Hindu Aryan, whereas the other two speakers are from the ethnic background that the song classifies as "Mongol". Yet, there is no substantial difference in their reaction to the song. As in the case of the map dispute with India, the flag burning music video stoked "hot nationalism" (Billig 1995) among a section of Nepali people. This time around, however, the Other is not an external actor, but someone from within the country. This internal dimension of nationalism also informs the frames (legitimacy frame, ignorance frame and implication frame) and discourse were used by the speakers in the reaction videos targeting the Nepali audience exclusively. The legitimacy frame figures as a way to declare the illegitimacy of the expressions in the song including the scene of flag burning in the music video. At the same time, it is used to project a supposedly legitimate anger and disappointment on the part of the speakers. While the assumption of their own legitimacy is taken-for-granted in their discourse, the speakers however explicitly flag the illegitimacy of the expressions of the rapper in various ways. FS1 recognizes that one can legitimately be frustrated and angry towards one's country, but this cannot justify an attack on the national symbols. He suggests that nationalism cannot be an object of anger and doing so, would be an anti-national act. For FS2, if there is

anyone who owes a public apology, it is the rapper. While FS3 sees legal problems in the rapper's act of flag burning, FS4 claims that the act has also violated the moral norms.

The other frame, ignorance frame, used by the speakers reveals that the basis of their position is not grounded in any objective knowledge. Rather, they rely on their personal feelings and experiences. This is evident in their lack of familiarity with the pre-existing politics and discourse that the song advances. The speakers in the reaction videos express their ignorance about the motivation, intention and meaning behind the song. However, they don't consider their own ignorance as a barrier to judge the merit of the song. FS1 calls the rapper potentially mad person who is ignorant about the reality of the country where he is living in. For FS3, it is the lack of sufficient education combined with the undue influence of Gopal Gurung, a person not known to him apparently and hence referred to as "old man", that put the rapper and his crew down the path of dissent and hence, suggest that they should be sent to school, presumably to receive a nationalist education. Not only the position of the rapper and his crew is illegitimate, the ignorance frame explicitly used by two of the speakers reveal that they are thought of as ignorant and misguided. It has been observed that most nationalist discourses are framed using the language of legitimacy and righteousness, among others (Malesevic 2018). The Nepali case discussed here is apparently no exception.

The implication frame helps the speakers to further position themselves as a nationalist who are concerned about the well-being of their country, as opposed as to the "anti-nationalist" stance taken by the song. FS2 is of the opinion that a song should carry a positive message and underlines the need to be forward-looking rather than harping on what happened in the past. The politics of division based on historical grievances, FS1 claims, will not work as people have no time for that in today's time. Even if one attempts to spread hatred regarding other

ethnic/religious groups, FS3 claims that it will be ineffective as people are not as ignorant and that they intuitively know that hatred is bad. In this way, FS1 and FS3 make an interesting distinction between a top-down political project and the realm of everyday life in which ordinary people are enmeshed. Scholars have also noted that these two arenas do not necessarily correspond to each other. As a result of the myriad compulsions of everyday life, people may operate differently than how the elites of state or non-state organizations would like them to operate (Brubaker et al. 2006; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). In the Nepali context, the reaction videos opposing the rapper give a clear impression that the MNO discourse and its politicization of flag has few takers. This is indeed true given the marginal status of MNO in Nepali politics (Hangen 2010), but one may still ask why all these reaction videos made by ordinary urban youths were uniformly against the rapper and his intervention. The spiral of silence theory can shed some light on this.

The spiral of silence theory states that individuals are hesitant to air their views in public if they come to believe that their own views are in the minority and thereby, avoiding the risk of isolation (Noelle-Neumann 1974). The confidence with which the speakers speak against the song and its flag burning music video in the reaction videos has to do with the fact that their views are very much in line with the mainstream nationalist ideological discourses, underpinning the modern consciousness, that reveres the national symbols such as the flag (Malesevic 2013). Noelle-Neumann writes, "He may discover that he agrees with the prevailing (or winning) view, which boosts his self-confidence and enables him to express himself with an untroubled mind and without any danger of isolation, in conversation, by cutting those who hold different views" (Noelle-Neumann 1974: 44). Despite being contested by several actors in the ethnic movement, the national flag of Nepal remains a distinctive and well-regarded among the symbols inherited from the old regime (Lal 2012). Following Nepal's adoption of a new

constitution in 2015, the identity politics in Nepal has also receded from the mainstream politics compared to how it was during the period of constitutional transition. In such a climate, it is controversial to burn the flag of Nepal and advance a radical ethno-racial discourse, but it is not controversial, and unexpected, for ordinary citizens to defend the flag and assert national unity - this is also well reflected in the reaction videos. The latter reaction also serves to reinforce the official state nationalism of Nepal.

5.4 Conclusion

The chapter examined the frames and discourse used by the speakers in the reaction videos to react to the controversial music video. Unlike the reaction videos with regard to the map/border issue discussed in the preceding chapter, all the reaction videos with regard to the event discussed in this chapter are aimed at Nepali audience. In this case, the Other is not an external actor but someone from within the country. The nationalist outburst, an instance of hot nationalism, that the reaction videos instantiated were informed by national frames, which I have identified as: i) Legitimacy frame; ii) Ignorance frame and iii) Implication frame. The analysis shows that these frames and the discourse correspond to the internal dimension of nationalist ideology, which insists that all other allegiances (ethnic, religious, etc.) are secondary to one's allegiance to the nation (Malesevic 2013). The national flag not only conveys the nation-state's unique and distinct identity in the world of nation-states, it also communicates to its citizens that their conduct, attitude and feelings should be in favor of the nation-state to which they belong (Weitman 1973). This symbolic significance of the national flag in the imagination of nationhood is also reflected in the reaction videos. Though the speakers seem to have no prior knowledge of the ethno-racial discourse advanced by the song, their respect for the national flag certainly preceded their encounter with the song and thus, making its violation in the music video instantly objectionable at a personal level. This respect for the flag as an

embodiment of the nation is fostered by the ideology and organization of the nation-state, making the national flag one of the critical sites of contestation for the alternative nationalisms which do not have the same ideological and organizational capacity as that of the state-propagated official nationalism. This also potentially accounts for why similar stance was taken by the speakers in the reaction videos and thus, reinforcing Nepali state nationalism.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

It has been almost seven years since the promulgation of a new constitution in Nepal in 2015. Nepal's transition from a centralized Hindu Kingdom to a secular federal republic has dislodged Nepali nationalism from its moorings in monolithic assimilative nationalism supported by the previous unitary state structure. However, as national identity has no definite empirical referents, it is bound to come into contestations in a country as diverse as Nepal. A national flag, as a symbol of the nation, can easily become an object of contestation in the symbolic struggles between state nationalism and alternative nationalisms - even though the flag may have a very popular appeal. This is not the case with territory which is defined by clear borders in accordance with the international norms and its symbolic depiction in a map is based on technology, even though the territorial imagination - the geo-body - may be infused with deep emotions and myths. Map, as a symbol of territory, comes into contestations usually not with the internal actors seeking to (re)define the image of a nation, but it is with the external actor(s) that map and territory have to be negotiated or contested with. The symbolic power of flag and map cannot be accounted for without reference to the nationalist ideology, embedded in the very organization of modern states, that makes the world of nations natural in the minds of both citizens and political actors.

Taking the recent cases of violation of national symbols such as map and flag in the context of Nepal, I have shown how these events have informed the frames and discourse of ordinary Nepalis as captured by the reaction videos available on YouTube. From the analysis, it emerges that the reaction videos on YouTube largely reinforce both the internal and external dimensions of Nepali state nationalism. This process, however, has an ideological aspect to it. The long-disputed territory of Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipulekh came to a fresh dispute between

Nepal and India after the latter unilaterally included the territory within its boundaries in an updated map in November 2019. Until recently, the disputed territory was also not included in Nepal's own map. Prior to this event, it was not necessarily unknown to Nepalis that the territory is administered by India. Generations of Nepalis have grown without seeing the disputed territory in the map. However, the news of India's inclusion of the disputed territory in its map was immediately perceived as the violation of Nepal's territorial integrity. It led to an eruption of hot nationalism among Nepalis, which was also captured by the reaction videos on YouTube. This demonstrates the strength of nationalist ideology in public consciousness. From the bottom-up, nationalist ideology also becomes a barometer to assess the performances and loyalty of the various actors in the country including the ordinary members of the putative nation. The frames and discourse of the speakers in the reaction videos take the world of nations for granted, which is evident in how they change their discourse according to their target audience - reserving internal criticisms for the Nepali audience when speaking in Nepali and omitting such criticisms when addressing the Indian audience in Hindi.

In the case of the flag burning controversial music video of August 2020, the reaction videos uploaded on YouTube present an interesting instance of the internal dimension of Nepali nationalism. The lyrics of the song advances a revisionist history of Nepal using an ethno-racial discourse promoted by a radical political organization called Mongol National Organization (MNO). The song depicts the politically dominant high-caste Hindus or the "Hindu Aryans" as "refugees" who had arrived from India before being able to rise up and dominate the natives or the non-Hindu "Mongols". The national flag is projected as a Hindu flag, unrepresentative of the non-Hindu "Mongols" and hence, it is burned in one of the scenes in the music video as a mark of protest. The flag burning act in the music video stoked hot nationalism among many Nepalis as also evident in the frames and discourse of the speakers in the reaction videos. This

reaction of course reinforces the state nationalism, as all states want their citizens to identify the flag as a symbol of nation. The analysis of the frames and discourse reveals the ideological aspect of this reinforcement process. No speaker in the reaction videos was familiar with the pre-existing discourse and politics of the MNO, which has demanded the change of national flag since its founding in the late 1980s. In fact, MNO website also features a proposed national flag of Nepal, which reflects the influence of nationalist ideology in the organizational thought. Though the speakers generally condemn the song based on their limited understanding of the lyrics, they reserve their disgust for the flag burning act in the music video. For them, the anger expressed by the singer is illegitimate, in contrast to their own legitimate anger over the song and its flag burning music video. They thus project the rapper as ignorant, anti-national, misguided, insufficiently educated and even, mad. MNO's alternative discourse of nationalism, that receives no blessing of the state's apparatus, is apparently no match with the official discourse of nationalism promoted by the state which has long primed Nepalis to see the flag as a unique and proud symbol of Nepali nation.

Through this case study from contemporary Nepal, I suggest nationalism is best conceived as an ideology. According to Malesevic (2019, 2013), organizational and ideological aspects of nationalism enable it to penetrate the everyday micro-interactional spheres, which works towards naturalizing the national framework in the minds of the people and thereby, aiding in the reproduction of nationalism. Though the state discourse of nationalism is powerful, it doesn't exhaust other discourses of nationalism that may contest or reinforce the state nationalism - but they all derive from the nationalist ideology. In his book 'Banal Nationalism', Billig (1995) contrasts banal nationalism with hot nationalism, associating the former with the processes of production and reproduction of nationalism in the sphere of everyday life. The hot variety of nationalism gets relatively little coverage in the book. I underline the analytical

significance of hot nationalism. While banal nationalism primes citizens for hot nationalism, hot nationalism also brings to view what constitutes the banal in banal nationalism. Hot nationalism activates the kind of frames and discourse which the ritualized events of celebration, commemoration and so forth do not activate. Hence, it provides an insight into the relationship between the nationalist ideology, national symbols and the bottom-up discursive practices in specific contexts.

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