

MEDIA DISCOURSE AND REGIONAL COOPERATION: THE 2024 CHINESE TWO SESSIONS IN THE LENS OF NEPALI JOURNALISM

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Abstract

The Chinese Two Sessions, which occur annually, are crucial in influencing China's political and economic frameworks. The sessions of 2024, held from March 4 to March 11, were especially important as they established the strategic plan for China's growth and its international relations. However, the representation of these sessions in foreign media, particularly in Nepal, is still insufficiently explored, creating a gap in the understanding of Nepal-China relations. This study aims to investigate how the 2024 Chinese Two Sessions were presented and reported by Nepali news outlets, emphasizing the narratives and viewpoints shared. Through content analysis, we systematically reviewed 15 articles from various Nepali online media published between March 4 and March 15, 2024. The articles were classified into news, features, and opinion pieces to evaluate the main themes and framing techniques. Key elements analyzed included the tone, thematic emphasis, and portrayal of bilateral cooperation and economic development. The findings indicate a strong focus on bilateral cooperation, economic advancement, and China's role in promoting regional stability. In particular, eight articles emphasized the collaborative efforts between China and Nepal, showcasing a shared commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and infrastructure growth. Discussions regarding China's global influence and political stability were also noted, although to a lesser degree. This study highlights the increasing importance of Nepal-China relations in the realm of regional cooperation and development. The positive framing in Nepali media suggests a strategic alignment with China's developmental goals, indicating potential benefits for Nepal in areas like infrastructure and technology. Enhanced media coverage is recommended to foster informed public discourse and deeper bilateral ties, thereby contributing to mutual understanding and regional stability. This research not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also serves as a foundation for future studies on media representations of international relations.

INTRODUCTION

China's annual parliamentary meetings, commonly referred to as the "Two Sessions," that were held from March 4-11, 2024, was a pivotal moment for the country's political and economic landscape. Organized by the ruling Communist Party of China

(CPC), these sessions are instrumental in setting the agenda for the direction that the country will take in terms of its development both at its own borders and abroad. During this period, lawmakers deliberated on pre-approved legislations, charting out policies,

priorities, and goals crucial for China's socio-economic advancement.

The significance of the Two Sessions extends beyond China's borders, resonating globally due to its implications for international relations and global influence. As China asserts its role on the world stage, decisions made during these meetings hold sway over various sectors, ranging from economic development to diplomatic relations. Notably, the outcomes of the 2024 Two Sessions included the approval and passage of key work reports and resolutions addressing economic plans, rule of law, and the central budget (Yang & Zhao, 2024). They underscored the emergence of new ideas, strategies, and targets aimed at guiding China's development, opening-up, and reform efforts in a new phase. In the context of this global discourse, the framing of the Chinese Two Sessions 2024 by Nepali news media holds particular significance.

Relations between Nepal and China can be defined as cordial, friendly, and cooperative, with the roots of their relations tracing back through history. Nepal and China enjoy a relationship which is higher than the mountains, deeper than the seas and stronger than iron amongst themselves. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in the year 1955, officials of both countries have paid numerous visits, promoting the strengthened trust between the two states (Nepal-China Media Forum, 2023).

China's advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics, underpinned by President Xi's Thought, has further strengthened bilateral ties. The announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative by China in year 2013 opened up a new era in the development cooperation between China and Nepal with rapid growth in political, economic, social and cultural interactions between the two countries. It is in this scenario that it is important to analyze how the news media in Nepal covered the Chinese Two Sessions 2024 since such analysis has a bearing on the relations between Nepal and China and their effects in the context of a regional or global perspective. The main aim of this research is to evaluate the coverage of the Chinese Two Sessions 2024 by the news media in Nepal and how different media houses reported this event.

Specifically, the study aims to:

Examine the narratives, themes, and perspectives presented in Nepali news coverage of the Chinese Two Sessions 2024.

Examine the framing strategies used by Nepali media to portray the significance, outcomes, and implications of the Two Sessions.

Provide suggestions for improving public awareness and media coverage of China's Two Sessions in Nepal in order to promote educated debate, positive interaction, and reciprocal collaboration between the two nations.

Offer recommendations for enhancing media coverage and public understanding of China's Two Sessions in Nepal, with the aim of fostering informed discourse, and mutual cooperation between the two countries.

Literature Review

The framing of international events by media outlets, particularly in the context of bilateral relations and regional dynamics, has been a subject of scholarly inquiry across various disciplines, including media studies, international relations, and political science. Understanding how news organizations portray and interpret foreign affairs offers valuable insights into the construction of public narratives, the shaping of public opinion, and the dynamics of diplomatic relations.

Scholarly research has examined particularly at how the domestic and foreign media cover China's Two Sessions, the country's yearly parliamentary meetings. Research has examined the patterns, narratives, and framing strategies used by media organizations to convey the significance and conclusions of the Two Sessions. Li and Zhang (2018) conducted a content analysis of the Two Sessions' coverage in Chinese media, emphasizing the reporting's dominant themes and discourses.

Moreover, research have delves at how Western media shapes perceptions on China's advancement in politics and economy. Researchers have studied how news reports about China are framed in Western media, paying particular focus to issues like economic expansion, and geopolitical competition. For example, (Zhao and Cao, 2017) investigated at how China's economic rise was portrayed in Western media, showing how negative narratives and skepticism regarding China's development trajectory.

Ahmad and Gul (2024) indicate that in a comparison of Pakistani and Indian print media Indian television channels tend to portray Chinese development in the region as a potential threat while Pakistani media consistently presents it in a positive light. In the context of Nepal-China relations, Scholarly literature has studied the historical, political, and economic dimensions of the bilateral relationship between China and Nepal. Research has examined into the factors that motivate Nepal and China to work together, including shared strategic interests, economies, geopolitical concerns, and common strategic goals. Furthermore, researchers have evaluated how China's expanding influence over South Asia, especially via programs like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), may affect regional dynamics and Nepal's future development path (Gyawali, 2019). Moreover, research has also addressed the role of media in shaping perceptions of China among Nepali audiences. Studies have examined how Chinese news media outlets, such as Xinhua and China Central Television (CCTV), are perceived and consumed in Nepal, as well as the influence of Chinese state-sponsored media on public opinion and discourse (Acharya, 2020).

Overall, the existing literature provides a valuable foundation for understanding the framing of the Chinese Two Sessions 2024 by Nepali news outlets. By drawing on insights from studies on media framing, China's global image, and Nepal-China relations, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping public discourse and perceptions of China's political and economic developments in Nepal.

Study Limitations and Scope

The analysis of how Nepali online media outlets portray the Chinese Two Sessions 2024 is the main objective of this study. Data collection is scheduled to be between March 4th and March 15th, 2024. At this time, the research will examine how different Nepali online media sources frame stories about the Chinese Two Sessions. The analysis will encompass aspects such as the thematic content, tone of coverage, sources utilized, and the influential factors shaping the framing of these news narratives.

The research confines its investigation solely to Nepali online media outlets. Consequently, perspectives

from other mediums such as print or broadcast media are not included, potentially limiting the comprehensiveness of the analysis. The data collection period of the study is limited to the dates of March 4th, 2024, to March 15th, 2024.

This temporal constraint may overlook developments or shifts in media coverage occurring before or after the specified duration. The absence of qualitative methods such as interviews or surveys restricts the depth of analysis regarding the factors influencing media framing. Moreover, reliance solely on content analysis may overlook nuanced contextual factors that shape media narratives. Despite these constraints, the research endeavors to offer valuable insights into the portrayal and interpretation of the Chinese Two Sessions within the Nepali online media landscape.

Theoretical Framework

The framing theory offers an extensive framework for examining how the Chinese Two Sessions 2024 are portrayed in Nepali news outlets. According to the framing theory, media outlets emphasize particular aspects of an issue while downplaying others in order to organize and present information in a way that shapes audience perspectives. According to this theory, audiences' perceptions and comprehensions of events are influenced by the facts or concepts that are picked, emphasized, excluded, and elaborated (Tankard et al., 1991; Entman, 1989).

In the context of the Chinese Two Sessions 2024, media frames serve as organizing mechanisms for news content, guiding audience interpretations and understanding of the event. Pan and Kosicki (1993) identified four main dimensions of news framing that influence the development of media frames: syntactic structures (word choice), script structures (evaluation of newsworthiness), thematic structures (causal themes), and rhetorical structures (stylistic choices).

Furthermore, different types of frames can be employed by media outlets to shape audience perceptions of political events such as the Two Sessions. For instance, frames related to violence and destruction focus on casualties and conflict intensity, while frames on marginalization highlight socioeconomic disparities and political grievances. Responsibility frames center on assigning blame and accountability for unrest (Hawkins, 2009).

To effectively apply the framing theory to the study of Perceptions of Chinese Two Sessions 2024 in Nepali News Media, the researcher will employ content analysis as the primary research method. Content analysis allows for systematic examination of media content to identify patterns, themes, and framing techniques employed by news outlets (de Vreese et al., 2001).

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The researcher will utilize a purposive sampling method to select Nepali online news media outlets for analysis. This approach ensures representation of diverse perspectives and coverage styles within the Nepali media landscape. Additionally, a specific timeframe from March 4th, 2024, to March 15th, 2024, will be selected for data collection to focus the analysis on coverage coinciding with the Chinese Two Sessions.

Frame of Data Analysis

The data analysis will involve identifying and categorizing frames present in news articles and stories related to the Chinese Two Sessions 2024. Frames may manifest in various elements of news content, including headlines, lead paragraphs, sources cited, quotes, and imagery (Tankard, 2001). The researcher will employ thematic analysis to identify dominant frames and assess their prevalence across different media outlets.

Types of Frames for Study

Development and Progress Frame: Emphasizes China's achievements and advancements discussed during the Two Sessions, highlighting economic growth, technological innovation, and social development initiatives.

Bilateral Cooperation Frame: The bilateral cooperation framework, which emphasizes cooperative projects, diplomatic interactions, and mutual benefits, focuses on Nepal-China ties and cooperation efforts that were considered or suggested during the two sessions.

Global Impact Frame: Global Impact Frame Examines how decisions taken during the Two Sessions could impact the globe worldwide, taking

into consideration China's role in regional stability, global governance, and international cooperation.

Political Stability and Governance Frame: The Political Stability and Governance Framework emphasizes China's commitment to effective governance and the rule of law through analyzing discussions on political stability, governance reforms, and policy decisions made during the Two Sessions.

Story Selection and Method of Collection

The primary goal of this study is to examine how the Chinese Two Sessions 2024 were framed in Nepali news media during a particular period of time: March 4–March 15, 2024. This era aligns with the Chinese Two Sessions period, making it a reasonable and relevant period to examine how Nepali media outlets presented and reported on the event. The method of data collection involved utilizing an electronic database search engine to identify relevant news articles and reports from Nepali news media outlets. Key search terms such as "Chinese Two Sessions 2024" were employed to retrieve articles related to the event. Initially, the researcher generated a sample of fifteen news articles and reports from Nepali media sources using the specified search criteria. These articles served as the primary unit of analysis for the study.

Coding Rules for Framing Analysis

1. *Development and Progress Frame*

Articles emphasizing China's achievements and advancements discussed during the Two Sessions.

Look for mentions of economic growth, technological innovation, and social development initiatives.

Note any positive language or tone regarding China's progress.

2. *Bilateral Cooperation Frame*

Identify articles focusing on Nepal-China relations and cooperation initiatives discussed during the Two Sessions.

Look for mentions of collaborative projects, diplomatic exchanges, and mutual benefits between the two countries.

Note positive language or tone regarding the relationship and cooperation efforts.

3. Global Impact Frame

Identify articles exploring the international implications of decisions made during the Two Sessions.

Look for mentions of China's role in global governance, regional stability, and cooperation with other nations.

Note any discussion on China's influence on the global stage and its relationships with other countries.

4. Political Stability and Governance Frame

Identify articles examining discussions on political stability, governance reforms, and policy decisions during the Two Sessions.

Look for mentions of China's commitment to effective governance and the rule of law.

Note any positive language or tone regarding China's governance efforts and stability.

Findings and Analysis

Data for this study were collected through electronic database searches using specific keywords related to news reports on the Chinese Two Sessions. A total of 15 news articles were systematically collected from Nepali online media outlets between March 4th, 2024, and March 15th, 2024. These articles were categorized into different genres, including News, Features, and Articles, to provide a comprehensive analysis.

Genre	News	Features	Editorials	Articles	Total
Number of Articles	8	2	0	5	15

Table 1: Distribution of Sample across Nepali News Media

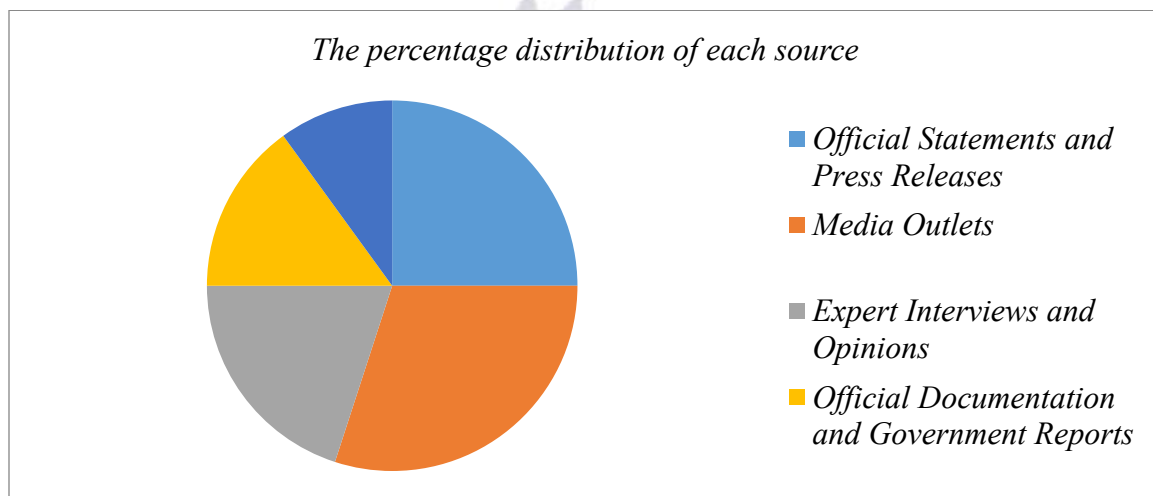
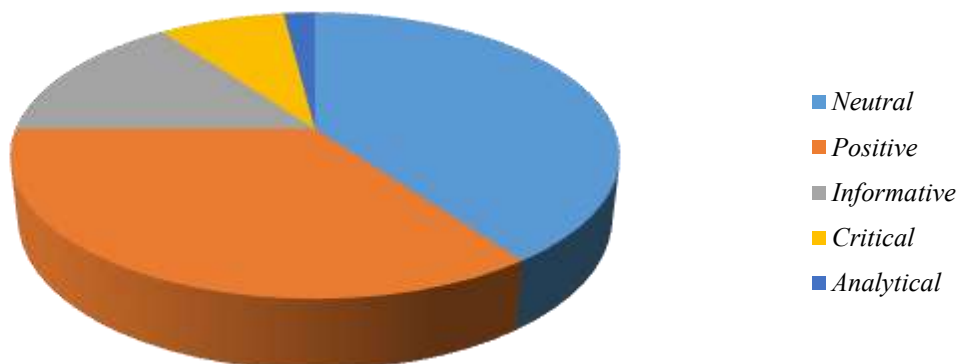


Figure1- Percentage of Distribution of sources

The percentage distribution of each tone**Figure2- Percentage of Distribution of tone****Dominant Frames in Reporting**

Rising Nepal Daily (March 7): Emphasizing the Development and Progress Frame and concentrating on business prospects and collaboration between China and Nepal, the article "China has lessons for Nepal in investment, agriculture"

The article "China to continue strategic relations with BRI members" in Rising Nepal Daily (March 8) highlights China's engagement with members of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and highlights the Bilateral Cooperation Framework.

The Rising Nepal (March 6): In analyzing the significance of China's political events and their implications for Nepal, the article "Significance Of China's Two Sessions" covers a number of frameworks, including Development and Progress, Bilateral Cooperation, and Global Impact. Rising Nepal Daily (March 14): focusing on the benefits of China's Annual Sessions and its implications for Nepal, the article "Photo Exhibition on China's Annual Sessions held in Kathmandu" focuses on the Bilateral Cooperation Frame.

Rising Nepal Daily (March 14): Expecting major debates and policy directions at China's Two Sessions, the article "What to expect at 'two sessions' in pivotal year" covers many frames, including Development and Progress, Global Impact, and Political Stability and Governance.

Nepal on the Web (March 8): The article "Photo Exhibition on China's Annual Sessions happened in Kathmandu" emphasizes the Bilateral Cooperation

Frame, discussing the implications of China's Annual Sessions for Nepal.

Nepal Press (March 7): The article "Three questions on 'Two Sessions'" focus on the Global Impact Frame, discussing China's role in global affairs and its implications for Nepal.

Risingsunkhabar (March 14): The article "Photo Exhibition on China's Annual Sessions held in Kathmandu" emphasizes the Bilateral Cooperation Frame, similar to the previous articles covering the photo exhibition.

Gorkhapatra (March 8): The article "आधुनिकीकरणको नयाँ अभियानमा आत्मविश्वास, चीनका दुई अधिवेशनको समुद्घाटन" focuses on the Development and Progress Frame, discussing China's modernization campaign and the inauguration of the Two Sessions.

Kantipur (March 8): The article "चीनमा दुई अधिवेशनका लागि तयारी तीव्र, मिडिया सेन्टर सञ्चालनमा" address the Bilateral Cooperation Frame, highlighting preparations for the Two Sessions and their significance for China's relations with other countries.

Onlinemajdoor (March 8): The article "'दुई-सत्र': एक 'रबर स्ट्याम्प' मात्र हो ?" discusses various frames, including Development and Progress, Political Stability and Governance, and Global Impact, as it questions the effectiveness and significance of the Two Sessions.

In Rising Nepal Daily's frame, (March 7) Analysis of the News Article: "China has lessons for Nepal in investment, agriculture", the news article frames China's economic plans positively, suggesting opportunities for development and cooperation with Nepal. The tone is optimistic, portraying China's efforts in a favorable light and indicating potential benefits for Nepal's development. The article provides insights into China's economic strategies and their potential implications for Nepal's development. Consideration of potential biases and broader context could enhance the depth of analysis.

In Rising Nepal daily's frame, (2024, March 8) Analysis of the News Article: "China to continue strategic relations with BRI members" The news article focuses on China's engagement with BRI member countries and its commitment to promoting connectivity and cooperation. The tone is generally neutral to positive, reflecting optimism regarding the potential benefits of China's initiatives for regional development. The article provides insights into China's foreign policy priorities, particularly regarding the Belt and Road Initiative. Consideration of potential biases and geopolitical implications could enhance the depth of analysis.

"Nepal, China renew pledge to sign BRI execution plan 'soon'", the news article focuses on the renewed pledge of Nepal and China to sign the BRI implementation plan and strengthen bilateral cooperation. The tone is positive, reflecting optimism regarding the prospects for enhanced cooperation and development between Nepal and China. The article provides insights into ongoing negotiations between Nepal and China regarding the BRI implementation plan. Consideration of potential challenges or controversies surrounding the BRI negotiations could enhance the depth of analysis.

"Significance of China's Two Sessions" The Rising Nepal. (2024, March 6) The blog adopts an analytical tone, providing insights into China's rise and the significance of its political events. The blog offers a nuanced analysis of China's rise and the importance of its Two Sessions, addressing global perceptions and concerns while presenting China's perspective on peaceful development. The blog provides historical context and geopolitical insights into China's rise. Further exploration of specific policies and decisions expected from China's Two Sessions could enhance

the analysis. The blog highlights China's ascendance as a significant geopolitical phenomenon, presenting it as a challenge to Western hegemony. Describes the Two Sessions as significant political events where China charts its future course, emphasizing global interest in the decisions and policies emerging from these sessions. "Photo Exhibition on China's Annual Sessions held in Kathmandu" Nepal on the Web. (2024, March 8) The news article provides insights into a photo exhibition focusing on China's Annual Sessions and their implications for Nepal, reflecting a favorable view towards China's role in promoting common development and prosperity. Consideration of attendee reactions and specific photographs displayed could enhance the analysis of the exhibition's impact. The article maintains a positive tone, emphasizing opportunities for cooperation between Nepal and China. "What to expect at 'two sessions' in pivotal year" Rising Nepal Daily. (2024,

March 14) Anticipation surrounds China's announcement of economic development goals for 2024, emphasizing quality growth alongside quantitative targets. Discussion on new productive forces driven by technological innovation is expected to be prominent. China's commitment to expanding high-level opening up in the face of global uncertainties is highlighted. The article anticipates key discussions and policy directions at the upcoming Two Sessions, reflecting China's proactive stance. The article provides a comprehensive overview of the anticipated agenda and focus areas for China's Two Sessions in 2024, reflecting a forward-looking perspective. Including perspectives from various stakeholders could offer a more diverse analysis. Exploring potential challenges or criticisms related to the proposed agenda items could provide a balanced perspective. The analysis reveals several key findings regarding China's engagement with Nepal, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the significance of China's Two Sessions. Despite challenges and reservations, both Nepal and China have reaffirmed their commitment to signing the BRI implementation plan, indicating continued cooperation in infrastructure development. Additionally, insights into the anticipated agenda and focus areas for China's Two Sessions underscore China's proactive stance in addressing domestic and global challenges while

promoting international cooperation. Further exploration of stakeholder perspectives and potential

criticisms could provide a more nuanced understanding of the issues discussed.

Frames	Development and Progress	Bilateral Cooperation	Global Impact	Political Stability and Governance	Multiple
Number of Articles	4	8	1	1	1

Table 2: Distribution of Frames

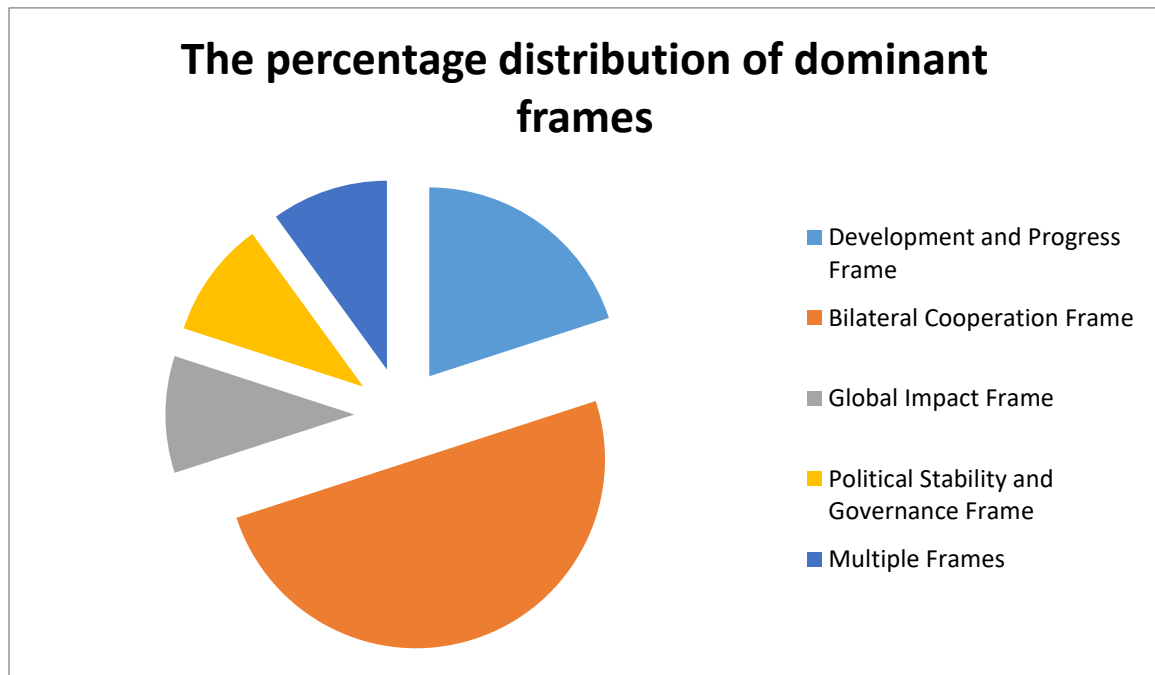


Figure3: Percentage of Distribution of Frames

This distribution shows that the dominant frames in the provided articles mainly revolve around bilateral cooperation between China and Nepal, with significant attention given to the implications of China's Annual Sessions for Nepal. Other frames, such as development and progress, global impact, and political stability are also present but to a lesser extent.

Conclusions

This research has provided valuable insights into the coverage and framing of news related to China's Two Sessions in Nepali media outlets. Through systematic data collection and analysis, several key findings have emerged:

China's Engagement with Nepal: The analysis reveals a positive tone in the reporting of China's economic plans and initiatives, emphasizing opportunities for

development and cooperation between China and Nepal. The renewed pledge to sign the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) implementation plan signifies a commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation, particularly in infrastructure development.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Despite challenges and reservations, both Nepal and China have expressed their commitment to the BRI, highlighting its potential to enhance regional connectivity and economic growth. The analysis underscores the importance of infrastructure development for fostering cooperation and mutual benefit between the two countries.

Significance of China's Two Sessions: The research sheds light on the significance of China's Two Sessions as a platform for charting the country's policy direction and vision for the future. President Xi

Jinping's speech and Premier Li Qiang's report provide insights into China's priorities, emphasizing innovation, economic growth, and international cooperation.

Potential for Bilateral Cooperation: The photo exhibition in Kathmandu and the discussions between Nepali and Chinese officials highlight the potential for bilateral cooperation in various sectors, including renewable energy, technology, and tourism. Both countries stand to benefit from enhanced collaboration and mutual exchange.

In order to enhance public understanding and comprehension, Nepali media outlets should keep covering China's initiatives and policies in-depth. This might include more detail and diversity of viewpoints regarding regional cooperation and China-Nepal relations. In conclusion, the results of this study show the significance of the relationship between China and Nepal as well as the possibility of bilateral collaboration in a number of areas. Through enhancing existing partnerships and encouraging increased cooperation, both countries can contribute to regional stability, economic growth, and mutual prosperity.

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