Appraising Mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China

2021

परराष्ट्र मामिला अध्ययन प्रतिष्ठान
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One of the prime agendas of Think Tanks is to focus on the expansion of their reach beyond national settings. Unfortunately, Think Tanks in South Asian Nations especially in Nepal have less experience internationalising their existence. Owing to this, Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) instituted study on " Appraising Mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China" stemming from the sheer absence of strategic priorities as well as seeking possibilities for forging future national and regional collaborations and partnerships.

Declaration
The research and discussion presented in this study are the original work by the author. I confirm that this work has not been submitted at any conferences or the like or any tertiary institute or University for any purpose. Any material presented by any person or institute is duly referenced, and a complete list of all references is presented in the bibliography.

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FOREWORD

One of the prime agendas of think-tanks is to focus on the expansion of their reach beyond National settings. Unfortunately, Think Tanks in South Asian nations especially in Nepal have less experience internationalizing their existence. The reports of the Institute of Foreign Affairs(IFA) on "Appraising Mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China" stems from the sheer absence of strategic priorities for effective partnerships between the think-tanks within Nepal and across the region.

Eventhough Think Tanks in the region are tremendously abundant, efforts for developing regional, national and global partnerships to enable collaborations are limited. Predominantly focused on national issue, when it comes to the research agendas, these think-tanks endorse fewer interactions among researchers across the region. Establishing interactions can help bridge the national and regional debates among the South-Asian Think Tanks.

The purpose and intent of the report is to trace the evident obstacles for such collaborations and envisages possible areas to initiate greater research partnerships and knowledge-sharing between IFA and major think-tanks in South Asia and China. Through proposed partnerships, the IFA can attain wider reach forging better partnership.

How did the think-tanks in the region evolve? What have their roles been? Do think-tanks face barriers in possible collaborations? What are the areas and prospects for partnership? – Questions as such are raised and extensively discussed in the paper.

The report briefly studies the evolution of think-tanks and their roles in the region with special focus on Nepal, South Asia and China over the years. Research and conferences on bilateral subjects and concerns can be of great importance in bringing attention to certain issues and advance understandings from respective countries. This will not only enrich the quality of research but also strengthen the relations through better understanding about each other.

The discourse in the report also places attention on hurdles that shape the interactions among the think-tanks in the region. Funding sustains a think-tank and ensures stability. This often motivates think-tanks to engage in collaborative research and conferences. While the study found projects based funding to be rampant in Nepal and South Asia, long-term funding, which both safeguards independence over the research

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agendas and conditions research to be collaborative has helped promote interaction between Think Tanks for enduring activity.

With the ever-changing political, national and international scenarios, there is also an increasing need for the think-tanks to stay pertinent and updated with their research focus. The report attempts to identify areas of collaboration and explore the prospects. It recommends areas and interests that are of greater relevance to the potential collaborators for undertaking research partnerships, conferences and discussions.

Since IFA, as a think-tank patronized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, bears more responsibility and anticipation, the report sheds light on a series of specific proposals and suggestions to enhance its international presence and engagement, improve quality of research, create greater visibility and increase its relevance. It also recommends possible areas of cooperation with the prominent Think Tanks of the region and suggests annual flagship events for IFA.

In view of current gap, IFA instituted this report to trace major think-tanks in the South Asian Region and China as it seeks possibilities for forging future national and regional collaborations and partnerships.

IFA wholeheartedly appreciates Prof Dr. Meena Vaidya Malla, Dr. Jayaraj Acharya, Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti, , Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai, Dr. Nishchal Nath Pandey, Mr. Mohan Krishna Shrestha, Mr. Bijaya Lal Shrestha, Dr. Santosh Sharma Poudel, Mr. Suresh Sharma for their constructive feedback and other support made the report, "Appraising Mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China" worthy of publication.

Finally, IFA extends its hearty thanks to Dr. Pramod Jaiswal for his good contribution of making available relevant information and suggestions despite his other important engagements.

Rajesh Shrestha
Executive Director
Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA)

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Acknowledgement

It was a pleasure to be a part of the study "Appraising Mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China" instituted by the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA). The findings of the study are intended to provide IFA with greater possibilities to enhance its institutional engagement, research productivity, and generate better understanding about Nepal's foreign policy and national priorities in the region.

I am highly indebted to Mr. Rajesh Shrestha, Executive Director, and Dr. Rupak Sapkota, Deputy Executive Director of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, for believing in my capabilities and providing me with the opportunity. I offer my sincere appreciation for their kind cooperation and encouragement throughout the process.

It is through great joy and pleasure that I acknowledge my friends working in different Think Tanks of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, who provided me with the resource materials and information that were vital in the completion of this report.

Furthermore, I would also like to acknowledge with much appreciation the crucial role of research assistants Sumnima Karki, Sunaina Karki, and Sumitra Karki, who have willingly helped me out with their abilities. Last but not the least, a special thanks goes to all the reviewers of the paper who contributed immensely to this research through their feedback and advice.

Dr. Pramod Jaiswal
May 10, 2021

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Executive Summary

This report of the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) was commissioned to explore the prominent Think Tanks of South Asia and China working on foreign policy, security affairs, economic issues, and development. The purpose is to scale the prospects of collaborative research and interaction among the Think Tanks to enrich the quality of research while strengthening the relations through better understanding about each other.

Some prominent Think Tanks of China and South Asia were identified through consultations with the officials and scholars at IFA based on their engagement with government institutions, visibility of their activities, publications, and recommendations by experts working in different Think Tanks of Nepal. The discourse also probes potential and mutual areas for IFA to conduct collaborative research with influential Think Tanks. It also attempts to suggest some flagship annual programs for IFA to expand its visibility and engagement in the region.

During the study, it was observed that the Think Tanks of South Asia often come across several challenges. Sustainability of South Asian Think Tanks is a real challenge attributed to the sparsity of continuous funding, while several Think Tanks have also failed to sustain because of the inability to diversify their research with the changing needs. Similarly, it was observed that the funder/donors frequently expressed their dissatisfaction with the beneficiary Think Tanks for failing to achieve the intended objectives, often times discouraging them from investing. Hence, the most grueling task for the Think Tanks in the region is to produce relevant research by justifying its value.

The tendency of most governments in the region to use Think Tanks as an 'old age shelter house' for retired diplomats and security personnel limits the chances of unconventional and alternate inputs from being introduced. Constantly having to prove their utility, although government Think Tanks like IFA do not typically struggle for funding, their findings are often challenged. The government anticipates greater advocacy roles from them in defending its plans and policies, and even the slightest deviation, at times, leads to undesired outcomes with an impact on their funding.

The study has recommended several research areas on which IFA can work with prominent Think Tanks of the region. It also suggests the following to enhance IFA's international engagement, improve the quality of research, create greater visibility, and increase its relevance:

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- **Research collaboration:** Signing MoUs with the mainstream Think Tanks of China and South Asia with the prospect of future research collaboration, joint events, and publications is recommended. This can cover issues such as foreign policy, security, climate change, economy, bilateral relations, and others.

- **Short-term and long-term research program:** It is recommended that IFA take the initiative of weekly or monthly debriefings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on contemporary issues that can have an impact on Nepal so that officials at MOFA can be updated with major international developments that have an impact on Nepal's foreign policy. IFA can have short-term and long-term projects. Short-term projects based on contemporary issues can range up to one year, while long-term projects can be in the nature of some vision document or grand strategy paper focusing on Nepal's national interests.

- **Produce Vision 2040 or 2050 document**: IFA can work on the strategy and design of the 'Vision 2040' or 'Vision 2050' documents. Such documents can be a catalyst in driving an informed and effective Nepal foreign policy in the coming 20-30 years.

- **Restructure and recruit human resources:** Restructuring IFA into different centers, recruiting competent full-time scholars for research, and conducting regular trainings for the scholars can ensure better efficiency.

- **Training and management of honorary consulates:** Nepal's honorary consulates are often accused of lacking the required competency and knowledge with regard to Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy. Hence, it is suggested that IFA train and manage the honorary consulates to enhance their qualifications as per the changing needs. Honorary consulates can additionally use their expertise to support IFA on research related to economic diplomacy.

- **New areas of research and cooperation:** Since Nepal is becoming vulnerable to climate change, and the world is engulfed by the COVID-19 pandemic, new areas of research, such as climate change, regional cooperation, climate security, and science diplomacy can be incorporated and prioritized.

- **Flagship Annual Dialogue:** It is further suggested that IFA host flagship annual programs, such as an IFA Think Tank Forum, IFA Annual Dialogue, South Asia Regional Dialogue, Nepal Foreign Policy Summit, Pararastra Niti Sambad, or Nepal Sambad for greater visibility of Nepal, in general, and IFA,in particular.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

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1. Introduction

Governments, in general, require ideas and suggestions that are proactive and pertinent within a specific socio-political context. Governments are not merely interested in knowing what is going wrong in the public system because as an 'insider', government officials are aware of the deficiencies in the system, and an outsider pointing to these does little to overcome the problem. Hence, what the government needs are workable solutions for improvements. Highly esoteric ideas or theoretical understanding – which may usually emanate from academics – may not be implementable even if they are socially and academically valuable. Likewise, the reproduction of ideas or actions already under implementation is of no particular use to the government. Hence, new refined ideas with adequate intellectual inquiry that can be deployed within the political context and with the available resources have the possibility of being welcomed by the government from external actors. This is where the Think Tanks become relevant.

Governments require solutions, mostly short-term, and tools that are applicable to quickly tackle a country's intractable problems, and the Think Tanks can meet such demands. Bureaucracies, which are involved in the day-to-day functioning of the state, hardly have any time to invent new ideas and mostly elaborate old ones, preferring continuity. For instance, policy design processes often involve questions and challenges. Here, Think Tanks with specialized knowledge can provide evidence-based knowledge to support the design of policy and programs for the government (Mendizabal and Echt, 2017). Think Tanks study the policies and problems prevalent in society, discuss the gaps, and suggest changes or alternatives. Think Tanks keep their proposals and suggestions ready, and when a problem emerges to which their proposals can be the solution, they jump into action (Boer, 2015). They recommend government policies for implementation. At their best, Think Tanks possess the capacity to encapsulate the political imagination by mediating ideas, stimulating public debate, and contributing pragmatic solutions to address the world's most critical problems. Particularly, in times of progressive division of labor and international integration, states and governments find it increasingly difficult to obtain all relevant information and knowledge about systemic contexts that they need for justifying policy decisions in terms of potential consequences thereof (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2011). Think Tanks are research, analysis, and engagement institutions that generate policy advice on domestic and international issues, enabling both policymakers and the public at large to make informed decisions (ibid.). However, Think Tanks also play a role in creating debates and discussion on the plans already formulated by the state,but lacking in clarity among the people to generate public support and awareness.

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Think Tanks matter because they serve as an important catalyst for new ideas and actions and help to set the policy agenda. They bridge the gaps in research and policies, providing legitimacy to the policies by supporting them with evidence, information, and advice (Shallowe, 2017). Consequently, as a policy institution that helps to bridge the gap between knowledge and policy, Think Tanks provide rigorous research and analysis, infuse public debates, and explore and propose policy solutions to the key challenges faced by the government. With the growing demand for policy expertise, Think Tanks are thus at the forefront of finding effective solutions to the existing and emerging policy challenges.

According to James G. McGann, the Founder and Director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the Lauder Institute, University of Pennsylvania, "Think Tanks are public policy research analysis and engagement organizations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, thereby enabling policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy" (2020 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report). In the 2020 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, he has divided Think Tanks into seven categories based on their affiliation:

- **Autonomous and Independent Think Tanks**: These kinds of Think Tanks are significantly independent from any one interest group or donor, and autonomous in their operation and funding from the government.
- **Quasi-Independent Think Tanks:** Such Think Tanks are autonomous from the government but controlled by an interest group, donor, or contracting agency that provides most of the funding and has significant influence over operations of the think tank.
- **Government-affiliated Think Tanks**: These Think Tanks are part of the formal structure of the government.
- **Quasi-governmental Think Tanks**: Think Tanks are funded exclusively by government grants and contracts but are not a part of the formal structure of the government.
- **University-affiliated Think Tanks**: These types of Think Tanks are policy research centers at a university, often referred to as a 'university without students' but researchers and scholars.
- **Political party-affiliated Think Tanks**: These kinds of Think Tanks are formally affiliated with a political party.
- **Corporate (for Profit) Think Tanks**: Think Tanks of such a nature are for-profit public policy research organizations, affiliated with a corporation or merely operating on a for-profit basis.

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Some of the key roles that a think tank plays in each country, as per James McGann, are as follows:

- **Democratization of political system and information:** Citizen's involvement in policy making provides the common people greater access to policy making not just as a target, but also as an agent. People want to contribute actively in policies that are going to affect them. Independent information, deliberations, and analysis through open debates about government decisions are often regarded as necessary for better policies. People believe this will bring an end to the state monopoly on information as well as decisions which are of concern to the common people. Unbiased information and open debates will also prevail over a situation where there is a crisis of confidence in government officials, as the people can participate, and the state and government merely become a facilitator in policy formulation, leading to democratization of the country.
- **Globalization:** The rise of globalization has led to massive increase in international actors that matter to the state in policy formation and development. Likewise, the process has also led to the internationalization of NGO funding with increasing pressure on issues of global concern from countries around the world. Amidst this, independent Think Tanks can communicate these issues to the international actors and vice versa. Hence the Think Tanks can function as a facilitator between international communities/ actors and states.
- **Sharing of technology and resources:** With the rapid modernization taking place, there is a growing need for the states to acquire proper technologies and resources. Countries all around have been making efforts to get hold of these emerging resources. But for this, the state needs proper institutions that can explore and recommend the state those new technologies and resources that can help speed up development.
- **Alternative views/ plan B:** The necessity of Think Tanks gets more imperative for the state and its people for generating policy alternatives and views. The Think Tanks analyze the state policy and generate practical choices and alternatives to those specific policies, so that the state and its people can have an option or plan B.
- **Policy implementation and disseminating ideas and policy:** The Think Tanks can also, nationally and internationally, deliver a state's demand for policy debates and publicize its ideas and policies. The Think Tanks can be vital in the dissemination of information to a broader audience.
- **People-to-people contact:** Today, states around the world not only interact on a government-to-government basis but also on a people-to-people basis. When it comes to people-to-people interactions and engagements, Think Tanks

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can be a great space to foster effective dialogue among people across the borders. In addition, Think Tanks frequently conduct talks at track 1.5held in-between government-to-government and people-to-people.

- **Capacity building**: There are different Think Tanks that help build up the competence of an institution and its human resources. These Think Tanks can provide training and nurture a professional Foreign Service Corps. If certain institutions are at an early process of establishment or require proper guidance for improvement, they can be supported by Think Tanks. Thus, they can be imperative in promoting efficiency and professionalism of both the institute and its human resources.
- **Idea formulation/ innovation center:** Think Tanks have also been promoted as an innovation center by the respective states. Think Tanks are believed to be a space where ideas can be created, discussed, debated, and tested prior to actual implementation. In the Think Tanks, experts can work thoroughly on the policies and constructively analyze their effectiveness and public responses.
- **Create alternative source for government's role:** Several states are short of sufficient financial resources for having an enduring structure for idea development. These states are not capable of funding and sustaining such kinds of institutions. This is where the Think Tanks come handy. The Think Tanks can collect funds from different international and national private or public donors and structure policies that can be used by the government.
- **Role of facilitator in easing out contentious issues/ negotiations:** States are oftentimes not willing to openly discuss or have a say on controversial issues. During such instances, the Think Tanks can effectively correspond, learn the possible points of compromise, and ultimately advise their state. The process can further help in easing out the contentious issues. Thus, the Think Tanks play the role of negotiators, putting greater effort, time, and energy than the state.
- **Link between government (that need policies) and education institutions that generate knowledge:** Many Think Tanks today also share the present-day needs of the government with the universities, which can generate knowledge. They share their problems and tasks with the universities and seek suggestions or solutions. Most of the time, universities fail to understand and meet the immediate needs of the state. Thus, it is with the assistance and collaboration of Think Tanks that the universities can be guided in generating knowledge, which can be consumed by the state immediately. Hence, Think Tanks can help in bridging the gaps between policy and implementation.

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1.1 Significance of the Study

Think Tanks in South Asian nations, especially Nepal, have less experience internationalizing their existence. Predominantly focused on national issues, when it comes to research agendas, these Think Tanks endorse fewer interactions among researchers across regions. Hence, establishing interactions can help foster national and regional debates among the South Asian Think Tanks. Even though there are a good number of Think Tanks in Nepal and abundant numbers in the region, efforts for developing regional, national, and global partnerships to enable collaborations are slender.

Nepal being a developing country, with a limited role in the international system, requires the support of these institutions and organizations to promote its national interest. It can achieve its desired outcome by strengthening its engagement with governments, national and international institutions, Think Tanks, experts, academicians, and policymakers.

The Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) is a leading think tank working toward generating national consensus on foreign policy issues, which also caters to the professional training needs of Nepali officials serving in the foreign affairs offices of the government. IFA delves into research studies on matters of national interest, particularly Nepal's relations and their conduct with foreign countries. Owing to the manifold objectives of strengthening Nepal's foreign affairs amidst the changing dynamics of global politics and regional arrangement, intensifying interactions and consultations with the global and regional Think Tanks would be undeniably fruitful. Moreover, since Nepal lies between China and South Asia, getting acquainted with the Think Tanks based in South Asia and China is important to create better understanding and enriched research through collaboration and regular interactions. It is in this context that the paper has studied about the influential Think Tanks of the region that work on foreign policy, security, and development issues that have an impact on Nepal's domestic and international affairs to enhance collaboration between them and IFA.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To explore influential Think Tanks of South Asia and China that are working on foreign policy, security affairs, economic issues, and development,
- To develop relations with them and have regular interaction and collaboration for enriched research and better understanding,
- To explore new areas of research for deepening socio, economic and political ties,
- To explore programs through which IFA can regularly support and suggest to the Government of Nepal, in general, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular, with its findings,

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- To further institutionalize IFA and establish it as one of the prominent Think Tanks of South Asia through their institutional history and experiences, and
- To explore a few flagship annual programs that can make IFA more visible in the region.

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the prominent and influential Think Tanks of South Asia and China that work on foreign policy, security, economic, and development issues?
- What kind of engagements and programs can IFA have with those prominent Think Tanks of South Asia and China?
- What kind of research can IFA and those Think Tanks have for deepening socio, political and economic ties between Nepal and those countries?
- What kind of short-term and long-term research program can IFA undertake that can provide regular support and suggestions to the Government of Nepal, in general, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular?
- What can IFA learn from those Think Tanks to emerge as one of the prominent Think Tanks of South Asia? How are those Think Tanks established? How do they recruit and train human resources, receive or generate funds to support research, develop relations with regional and global Think Tanks, and provide support to the government of the host country through their findings? How do their researchers conduct quality research?
- What kind of flagship annual dialogue can be conducted that can make IFA more visible in the region?

1.4 Methodology

The study enlisted prominent Think Tanks of South Asia and China and conducted in-depth research through the collection of data as per the requirements of the research questions and objectives to select the most influential Think Tanks. Think Tanks engaging with IFA and the Government of Nepal were given importance. Data was collected through primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the think tank's annual report and interviews with the heads or scholars of the think tank, while the secondary sources include information published by different sources, such as books, journals, newspapers, and other sources. The list of prominent Think Tanks was prepared in consultation with the officials and scholars of IFA based on their engagement with government institutions, visibility of their activities, publications, and recommendations by experts working in different Think Tanks of Nepal. Once the aforementioned findings were collected, examined, and analyzed, strategies for collaboration were developed, and research areas were explored.

The study, however, doesn't incorporate all the prominent Think Tanks as engagement

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with all the major Think Tanks of one country working in the same sector wouldn't be practically feasible. Thus, a few prominent Think Tanks have been missed out, which is the potential limitation of this study.

1.5 About Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA)

Established in 1993, the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) is a think tank patronized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal. As a premier foreign policy research think tank, IFA aspires to develop itself as a repository of knowledge on Nepal's foreign relations and national interest. The Think Tanks over the years has been providing necessary and appropriate support to the Government of Nepal, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It does so by imparting professional training to Nepali Foreign Service officials and personnel; offering suggestions and recommendations for foreign policy formulation; undertaking study and research programs and publications on vital issues relating to foreign policy and national interest; and updating and compiling historic documents and information on Nepal's relations with foreign countries.

With the ambition to develop itself into a storehouse of knowledge on Nepal's foreign relations, in 2012, IFA was reconstituted as a semi-autonomous body. Since then, it has been organizing conferences, seminars, webinars, workshops, and discussions on various dimensions of Nepal's foreign policy. It also publishes timely reports, books, journals, bulletins, research papers, and magazines on issues of Nepal's foreign relations. Quite often, IFA organizes orientations and training to the newly-appointed ambassadors and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on foreign relations and diplomacy.

It also engages in producing concept papers, including g strategic analysis, on foreign affairs for the government, additionally providing suggestions and advice to the government with regard to reforms to be made in the consular services and code of conduct while opening embassies, consulates-general and consulates. It intends to establish linkages with similar organizations, including governments, INGOs, NGOs, both at home and abroad, to build up institute-to-institute relations. The key research areas of IFA include foreign policy, international relations, economic diplomacy, defense and security studies, strategic studies, political economy, international law, development studies, and other emerging issues. This foreign policy research Think Tanks engages panels of experts from diverse disciplines, such as diplomats, academicians, bureaucrats, researchers, and journalists. IFA is funded by the grant assistance from the Government of Nepal, contributions from national individual(s) and organization(s), donations from international organizations and foreign governments, foreign agencies and individuals, and income from publications and other sources.

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CHAPTER II

Evolution of Think Tanks

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2. Evolution of Think Tanks in South Asia

2.1 Evolution of Think Tanks in South Asia

Think Tanks in South Asia throughout the years have turned into strong influencers. With the increase in the number of Think Tanks, they have been able to orient themselves in multiple ways, some toward helping to address issues concerning public policy while others becoming a part of movements that support grassroots-level activities. Still others have emerged as leaders in their domain, seen as experts within government bodies (Ravi Chander, 2018).

Think Tanks in South Asia have also been shaped through their own evolving political contexts. With the legacies of internal divisions, exploitation, and domination by external and internal power elite, there are many issues the region faces in common. The United Service Institution of India, a national security and defense services think tank based in New Delhi, founded in 1870, is among the earliest Think Tanks to be established in South Asia. The 1970s, in particular, saw a veritable explosion in the establishment of Think Tanks; however, it was only after the end of the Cold War that Think Tanks proliferated significantly. This was due to the emergence of semi-governmental and corporate Think Tanks dealing mostly in economic affairs.

The transnational character of many policy problems across the region creates dynamics for research collaboration, sharing of information, and cooperation. They bring the Think Tanks together into the global domain to meet the demands of governments and international organizations for information, analysis, and other knowledge services. The South Asia region, likewise, still remains embroiled in issues that are transnational in nature, mostly related to border disputes, political instability, insurgency, and terrorism. Hence, there is an increasing number of Think Tanks related to security in the region. Similarly, Think Tanks working in consortiums have also become an important activity in South Asia (Ravichander, 2018).

The Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT), founded in 2008 in New Delhi, is the first of its kind in South Asia that aims to foster better relations between the prominent Think Tanks of South Asia and bring about quality publications on various facets of regional cooperation. The contribution made by COSATT in the region for strengthening cooperation and promoting the concept of South Asian-ness through continuous intellectual discourse and policy advice has created a milestone and established the consortium as one of a kind. According to COSATT's official website,

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COSATT conferences are held three times a year in one of the capitals of South Asia on themes such as connectivity, countering violent extremism and terrorism, refugees, IDPs in South Asia, etc.

Some of the oldest Think Tanks of South Asia are the United Service Institution of India, Indian Council of World Affairs, Nepal Council of World Affairs, Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, Center for Economic Development and Administration, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, and Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, among others. Similarly, some of the emerging Think Tanks of South Asia in recent years are the Observer Research Foundation, Center for Land and Warfare Studies, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, Center for Bhutan and GNH Studies, et al.

Table 1: Number of Think Tanks in South Asia (2010-2020)

India	292	269	268	192	280	280	280	444	509	612
Bangladesh	34	35	35	23	35	35	35	38	36	46
Pakistan	19	19	19	19	20	20	20	25	25	33
Sri Lanka	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	32	32	32
Nepal	13	13	13	8	12	12	12	13	13	19
Bhutan	-	-	1	1	9	9	9	3	3	3
Maldives	-	-	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Afghanistan	-	-	6	6	6	6	6	22	22	46

*Data not available

Source: Compiled from Global Go To Think Tank Index Reports

Think Tanks are seeing an increasing trend in South Asia. If we look at the number of Think Tanks of South Asia in the last one decade, a sharp rise can be observed particularly in India and Afghanistan. In the year 2011, India had 292 Think Tanks, which more than doubled in 2020. Currently, India has the third-largest number of Think Tanks in the world at 612. (Times of India, January 31, 2021). Similarly, in Afghanistan, a massive surge can be witnessed when it comes to the number of Think Tanks after 2017. In 2017, there were six Think Tanks, which jumped to 22 in

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2018, and 46 in 2020. Interestingly, the number of Think Tanks in the Maldives has remained constant while there is a slight increase in Nepal. Unfortunately, there is a decline in the number of Think Tanks in Bhutan.

2.2 Evolution of Think Tanks in China

China's Think Tanks have become one of the key mediums for foreign observers to follow developments and gain insights into the Chinese policy-making system. Think Tanks in China emerged in the early 1980s and have ever since expanded in quantity while improving the quality of personnel and analytical products. In 2007, the report of the 17th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Congress explicitly mentioned 'the role of Think Tanks' for the first time, indicative of the rapid development of Think Tanks as well as their expanding influence. In China, however, some experts claim that due to the one-party system, there are no truly independent Think Tanks as they operate within the administrative hierarchies under either a State Council ministry, a Central Committee department, or one of the general departments of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which provide funding to the think tank/research institute under their authority (Casarini, 2012: 4). Cumulatively, Chinese international relations Think Tanks have evolved in their functions, responsibilities, and influence. Today, they must be considered important actors in the foreign policy making process in the People's Republic of China, playing an increasingly important role in China's foreign policy making, intelligence analysis, as well as serving as an increasingly important liaison with officials and specialists in foreign countries (Shambaugh, 2020: 575-596).

The central government of China had planned to identify and approve 50 to 100 "new-type" of Think Tanks by 2020, which will receive special recognition by the Party Central Committee. Their role is to serve the government by "promoting scientific and democratic decision making, promoting modernization of the country's governing system and ability, as well as strengthening China's soft power" (Hayward, 2018). Over the years, think tank influence has certainly grown commensurate with China's involvement in global affairs: ministries, localities, and even private companies and educational institutions have needed information on foreign countries and international affairs, and this demand has created important new revenue streams for the Think Tanks (Shambaugh, 2020: 575-596).

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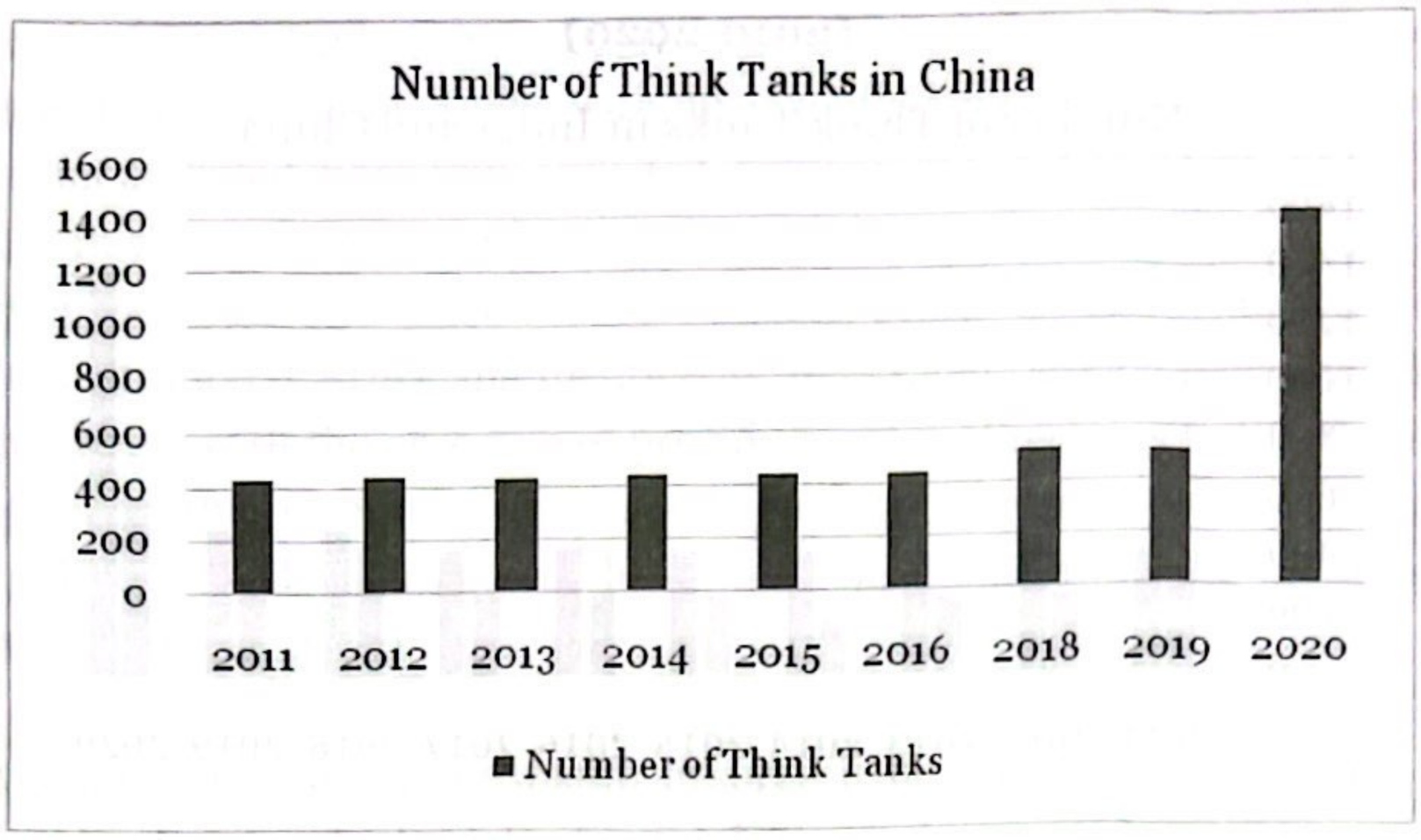
Figure 1: Number of Think Tanks in China (2010-2020)



Source: Compiled from Global Go To Think Tank Index Report

When we look at the trend of the lastdecade in the region, there is a sharp increase in Think Tanks notably in India and China. While there is a huge up surge in the number of Think Tanks in China after 2019, the rate of growth of Think Tanks in India has been on the rise after 2017. In 2019, there were only 507 Think Tanks in China, while in 2020, it increased to 1,413 as the government allowed business houses to establish private Think Tanks, mostly working on economic issues. In the case of India, there was a decline in the number of Think Tanks after 2011, reaching the lowest in 2014. With the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coming to power in 2014, the government wanted to reformulate its foreign policy and restructure the Think Tanks, thus, after a short gap, there has been increasing trends in the number of Think Tanks in India as well.

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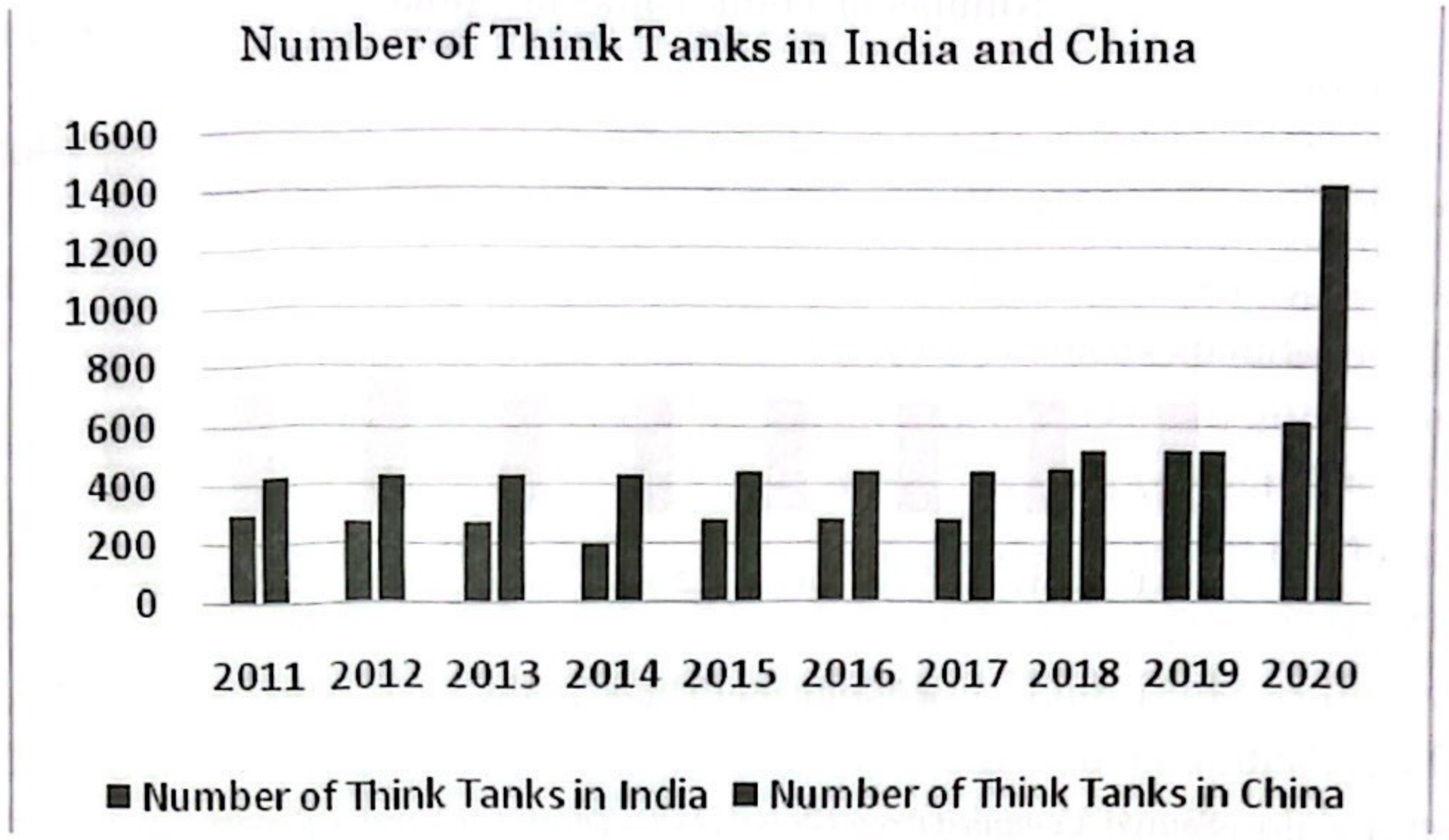
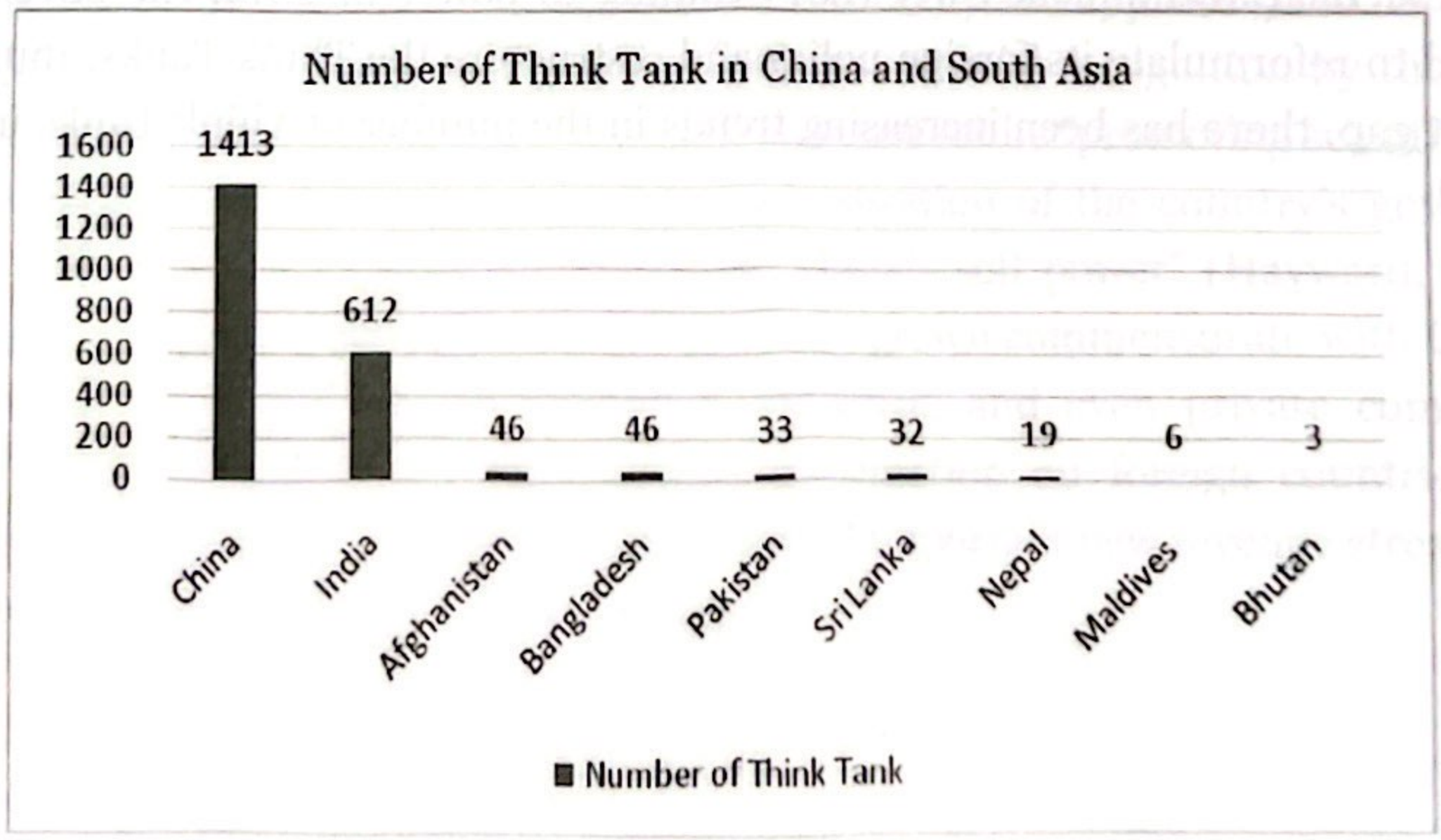
Figure 2: Comparison Between Number of Think Tanks in India and China (2010-2020)



Source: Compiled from Global Go To Think Tank Index Report

In 2020, out of a total of 3,389 Think Tanks in Asia, China alone accounted for 1,413. In South Asia, the highest number of Think Tanks is in India at 612, followed by Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Both countries have 46 Think Tanks each. Similarly, there are 33 in Pakistan, 32 in Sri Lanka, 19 in Nepal, 6 in Maldives, and 3 in Bhutan.

Figure 3: Number of Think Tanks in China and South Asia in 2020



Source: Compiled from Global Go To Think Tank Index Report 2020

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2.3 Evolution of Think Tanks in Nepal

Emergence of Think Tanks in Nepal can be traced back to the 1950s with the emergence of a democratic era. Think Tanks with diverse affiliations have surfaced since then government affiliated, university affiliated, autonomous, independent, and politically affiliated. In the early days, various study centers at Tribhuvan University, such as the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Center for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), and Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) came into being with the objective of providing policy directions to the government. However, after the restoration of democracy in 1990, most of the institutions were highly politicized, which hindered the institutions from producing the anticipated outcomes (Pokharel, 2019).

Moreover, after the 1990's, there was an up surge in the number of Think Tanks, though many could not sustain for long due to a fund crunch. In recent times, autonomous and independent Think Tanks have emerged in Nepal that are functioning with significant independence from any interest group or donor, and are autonomous in their operation and funding from the government, e.g., South Asia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS), Nepal Council of World Affairs, Center for South Asian Studies (CSAS), Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE), Martin Chautari, and Social Science Baha. Moreover, the incumbent Prime Minister, KP Sharma Oli, has publicly announced his plan to establish Think Tanks under the Prime Minister's Office. In fact, former Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai-led government (2011-2013), likewise, had announced to set up three separate Think Tanks concentrating on security, strategic, and foreign policy affairs (Onta, 2018). In 2018, the government came with a government-affiliated think tank, Policy Research Institute, with the objective of reviewing public policies, programs, and strategies through rigorous research and analysis so as to provide policy recommendations to the Government of Nepal. It was to carry out studies on issues around diverse public sectors and serve as an interface of knowledge and policy formulation. Though there are increasing numbers of Think Tanks in Nepal, not many have sustained over the years. As a result, the number of Think Tanks in Nepal has been relatively stable.

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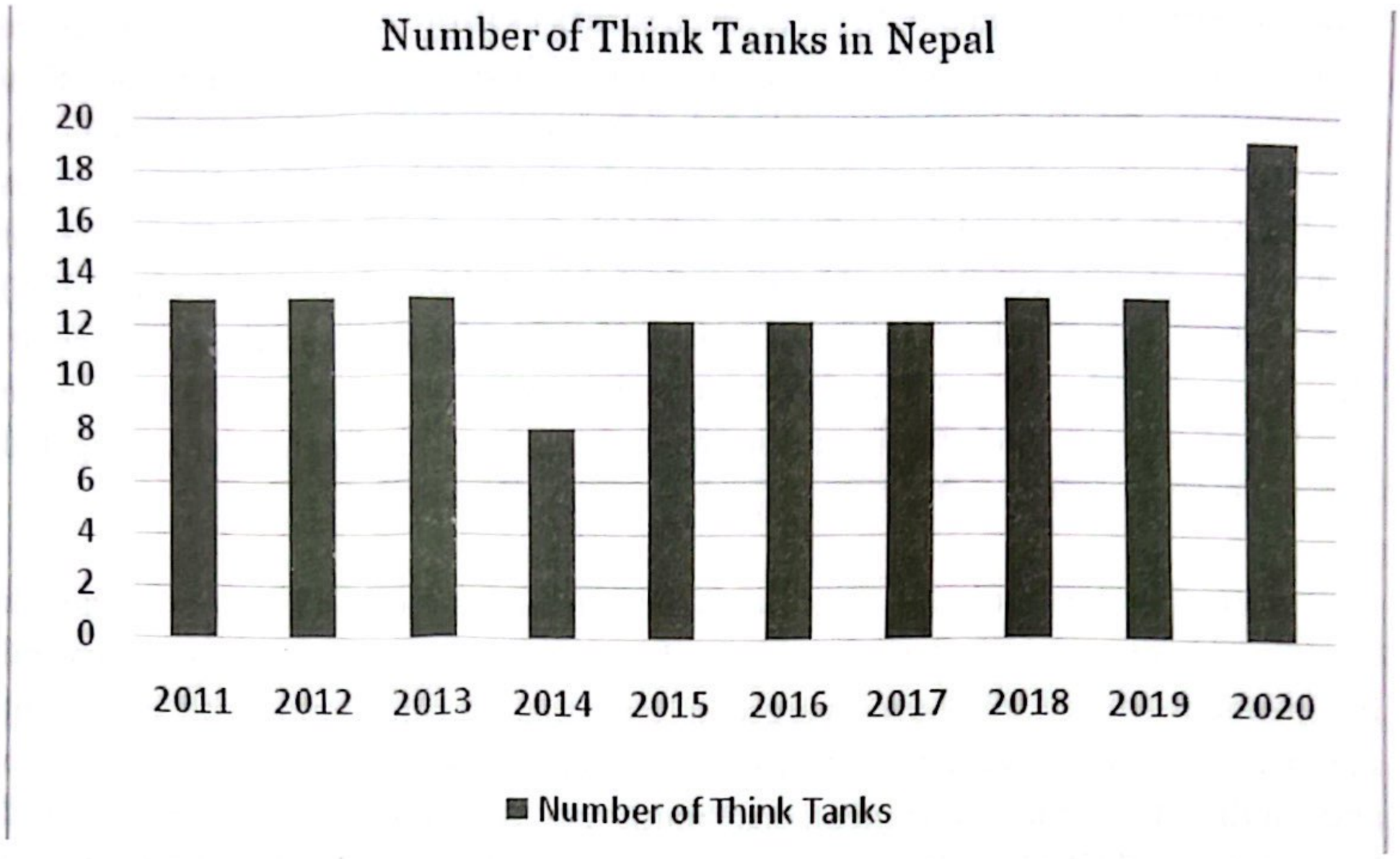
Figure 4: Number of Think Tanks in Nepal (2010-2020)



Source: Compiled from Global Go To Think Tank Index Report

2.4 Role of Think Tanks for Small States like Nepal

With its small size, economy, and lack of 'hard power', the priorities, agendas, and interests of small states seldom come in the forefront of the international system. It is mostly the voices and interests of big powers that occupy center stage. But small nations do have their interests as they are more sensitive to their autonomy and make up an integral part of the world order. This is specifically because the small states do not attain the degree of 'real sovereignty' or 'autonomy' which the big and more powerful states realize. Owing to their lack of influence, the small states have more intense interest than other states in enhancing their decision's impact in high politics, bilateral engagements, and their involvement in the multilateral organizations. The diplomatic process becomes a more vital aspect of their approach to security than it may be for the larger states. Due to the limited option to meet their policy agendas, most small states have managed to join bodies, regional or global, and maneuver to promote their interests within these frameworks. Within this multilateral system, the small states, like the larger ones, seek to pursue the objectives of security and prosperity. In the same order, bilateral cooperation and collaboration are also sought for. There is a need

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to have dialogue with the different actors that shape policies to convince one's case, sometimes at the official and unofficial levels as well. This is where the role of Think Tanks becomes significant in order to have track two dialogue and influence the actors for favorable outcomes. Think Tanks help small states advance their national interest and make themselves more relevant in the international system through engagement with the policymakers of different countries, institutions, academia, and media.

Think Tanks are able to translate the findings of fundamental research into policy options and enable leaders and policymakers to predict the effects of the decisions made. The availability of such expert advisory bodies can help these less influential countries to make the most out of the resources available through bilateral and multilateral engagement to attain their agendas and goals. A calculated involvement of small states in the international environment will enhance their external reach while, at the same time, being able to maintain the core values of their foreign and security policy. The Think Tanks can further provide detailed analysis and recommendations regarding the compatibility of international frameworks and whether these less influential small states should or shouldn't adopt certain policies.

A proper analysis and discussion of policies by the Think Tanks could also cater to the small states' effective diplomatic engagement and functioning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies, permanent missions, and consulates. Likewise, formalization of the infrastructural, security, and development strategies in a bilateral engagement also seeks an extensive advisory body for better implementation. Think Tanks could be instrumental in widening local ownership of such development strategies, helping to set right an information disparity on development, as solutions and projects that often come from the outside are not sufficiently tailored to local circumstances and particular characteristics of the country's political economy.

Think Tanks in small states can be significant in interpreting legal and national goals to the international community, bringing their issues of importance to the forefront. In a small (not in size but in terms of economy and hard power) and developing nation like Nepal, economic Think Tanks hold much importance. They can operate as a consultant that would be useful in providing analysis on foreign markets for companies seeking to enter new markets or expanding their operations overseas. The economic Think Tanks help to effectively respond to requests from businesses to organize forums for closed policy discussion for better promotion of a country's economic interest. High-quality,

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comprehensive data, and analysis will help ease the demands on policymakers to address the country's economic and social problems. Hence, the growth of a community of Think Tanks performs a symbolic role of representing national advancement in political, economic, and educational development. Let us take the issue of climate change, for example,that Nepal is prone to. Nepal has limited capabilities and capacity to pressure or influence international organizations in its favor on the issue. However, through different track-two organizations like Think Tanks, it can create debates around the world among institutions that have similar aims and create huge pressure or influence on the international institutions.

The role of Think Tanks in a democratic society is to engage in the battle of ideas by providing research-based advocacy and evidence-based commentary on pertinent public affairs. Think Tanks publish articles, studies, or even draft legislation on particular matters of policy or society through greater participation and open discussions, including debates. This information can then readily be used by governments, business houses, media organizations, social movements, or other interest groups as part of their goals, which will have greater acceptability in the society.

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◆Appraising Mainstream Think-Tanks of South Asia and China .....

CHAPTER III

Mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China

Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) 19

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3. Mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China

Nepal lies between the two Asian giants – India and China. While both are economic (China is world's second and India is world's fifth) and military giants (China is world's third and India is world's fifth in military strength), both aspire to be regional and global powers. Due to antagonistic relations, both the powers also compete against each other. In such a situation, both the countries are also going to spend more on their Think Tanks to formulate robust foreign, strategic, and economic policies.

Since Nepal lies between these two great powers, intensifying interactions and consultations with their Think Tanks will be fruitful. Beyond the immediate neighbors, India and China, Nepal can also benefit by engaging with the Think Tanks of the region. Hence, the study focuses on the mainstream Think Tanks of South Asia and China that IFA as a government Think Tanks can collaborate with. Through such partnerships it can further strive for better relations at track two level that will further strengthen the ties between them. IFA can also learn from the experiences of leading Think Tanks of the region, formulate plans accordingly, implement them and collaborate as the leading Think Tanks of South Asia.

Nepal enjoys excellent and close ties with its immediate neighbors and has greater engagement with them, hence, the study emphasizes more on the Think Tanks of China and India. It examines six Think Tanks from each of the countries while greater attention has been given to the domestic Think Tanks – more than a dozen of them. The selection of Think Tanks was done through consultations with IFA officials and scholars, Think Tanks' engagement with government institutions, their visibility and activities, publications, and as per the recommendations of experts working in the different Think Tanks of Nepal. Some were also selected based on the different sectors that the study was focused on.

3.1 Afghanistan

3.1.1 Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS)

Established in October 2012, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) is a leading research institution in Afghanistan. AISS is an independent, not-for-profit research institute keen on providing qualitative, non-partisan, and policy-oriented research, publication, translation of books/reports, professional training, and policy advocacy with special focus on Afghanistan. The institute aims to build intellectual space for addressing strategic issues pertaining to Afghanistan in the wider regional and international contexts, and within it seeks to cultivate timely discussion on Afghanistan

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by publishing high-quality research reports and promoting dialogue amongst a wide spectrum of stakeholders. In achieving its ambition to contribute to ongoing efforts to consolidate Afghanistan's fragile achievements, AISS has been conducting a series of independent researches while organizing seminars, conferences, workshops, and briefings on a provincial, national, and international level. The institute also publishes as well as translates books, journals, and articles. Similarly, it also collaborates and partners with reputed and like-minded research institutes. Currently, it has also been offering executive type leadership training programs, and initiating and sponsoring annual public awards in recognition of outstanding Afghan youth and international personality.

The research projects are conducted on a broad range of political, economic, and societal issues with focus on democratic state building process; national security; sustainable economic development; regional cooperation/integration; US/West-Afghanistan strategic partnerships; Islamic renaissance; and Khorasan of ideas (national/regional cultural integration/renewal). Some of the flagship events of the AISS include Sussex Afghanistan Forum, Avicenna International Award for Inter cultural Cooperation for Peace, High Tea with Ambassadors, Herat Security Dialogue, etc.

The engagement between Nepal and Afghanistan, especially on academic grounds, remains rare and unexplored. Although both nations do share SAARC membership, much hasn't been achieved from it. This gap, however, can be an opportunity for the Think Tanks to consider several unexplored areas where they can collaborate in the future. Afghanistan in the coming days will be experiencing a huge political transition and will be dealing with the post-war landscape. Nepal's experience in the peace process can help Afghanistan explore better alternatives. Similarly, Afghanistan's experience in dealing with great powers and its presence in SAARC are significant to Nepal. Holding discussion and research collaboration can be a great medium to mobilize expertise from both the Think Tanks and generate ideas for better alternatives.

Hence, it is suggested that IFA and AISS conduct joint research on issues related to security, regional cooperation, and integration. Such collaborative research can be succeeded by discussion on the respective subject matter in the presence of the major stakeholders. IFA together with the Think Tanks from Afghanistan can promote discourse and a culture of dialogue through "Nepal-Afghanistan Dialogue". Events as such could facilitate pertinent dialogue and boost discussion on Afghanistan's peace process as Afghanistan is currently embroiled in managing

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the consequences following the withdrawal of U.S. troops and with Afghan people fleeing to Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to seek refuge from the Taliban. Additionally, collaboration could include one-time as well as long-term involvement of certain experts from Afghanistan's research institution or from IFA in joint project activities.

While both countries are confronted with great power rivalries, studies on the issue in the South Asian landscape can also be conducted. As China has been heavily investing in both the countries through projects like the BRI, and possibly the CPEC for Afghanistan, reports and expert-level discussions on Chinese investments, projects, and their implications carry great prospects and coincides with both IFA and AISS research interest.

Similarly, IFA can also plan for Dialogue with Ambassadors similar to the High Tea with Ambassadors by the AISS and can even coordinate an IFA Security Dialogue. Both the institutes can immediately initiate joint research work on exploring the cultural ties between Nepal and Afghanistan as there are Buddhist relics in Afghanistan, as Buddhism can be one of Nepal's soft powers. AISS has also conducted research related to culture and organized cultural dialogue regularly.

3.2 Bangladesh

3.2.1 Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

On June 25,1978, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh founded the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) as a statutory institution with the aim of undertaking and promoting research and deliberation on international affairs, security, and developmental issues. The institute advances knowledge and understanding of contemporary international and strategic issues from a national and regional perspective. In the process of doing so, it undertakes and promotes studies, research, and dissemination of knowledge in the fields of international relations, national issues, and policies relating to security, defense, external relations, and international peace and security, including strategic aspects. BIISS also assists the Government of Bangladesh in the planning, formulation, and implementation of policies in relevant fields, and acts as a forum for debate and deliberation by scholars, decision-makers, and members of various professional groups. These discussions are aimed at greater public understanding of national, regional, and international issues and policies. The think tank additionally serves as an information and documentation center on international affairs and strategic studies, and promotes institutional and

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professional collaboration, specifically, exchange of information, views, and materials with the agencies and scholars engaged in similar studies and research within and outside the country. A series of meetings and lectures, seminars, and conferences are also held by the organization for better understanding of relevant national and international issues. Its publications include books, periodicals, and reports. It also encourages young and emerging scholars by providing research scholarships and fellowships to encourage studies in various fields relevant to the aims and objectives of the institute.

The priority research areas of the institute include foreign policy, security, and strategic issues with specific relevance to Bangladesh. Likewise, regional, sub-regional, inter-regional and international cooperation, non-traditional security issues, socio-economic development, environment, and natural resource management are other fields of interest. Issues related to peacekeeping, security of small states, disarmament, global peace, North-South and South-South cooperation, contemporary issues of South Asian politics, security, and development are also some of the major areas of focus. Within South Asia, Bangladesh's relations with the neighboring countries receive key interest. Bangladesh's external relations with its development partners also receive scholarly attention. The research agenda of BIISS is frequently tailored to the dynamics of global changes. Hence, in the post-Cold War era, the interest is focused more on ethno-religious, regional and sub-regional cooperation, globalization, environment, super-power rivalry, non-alignment, and related issues of the Cold War period. The flagship events of the organization are BIISS Scholarship on International Relations (BSIR), Bangladesh-South East Asian Relations, Regional Stability: The Role of Small States, Dialogue on Interactions with the Bordering States of India, Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Bay of Bengal: National Capacity Building for Bangladesh, and Human Security in South Asia: Discourse and Bangladesh Human Security Assessment. BIISS has also built partnership and collaboration with a number of similar academic and research institutions, both within and beyond South Asia. The established linkages have resulted in the exchange of publications, reciprocal granting of research facilities to visiting scholars, co-sponsoring of seminars, joint research, exchange of scholars, and short-term mutual visits. Within the country, the institute works in close collaboration with a number of research and academic institutions in the country. Some of the partners of BIISS include the Ford Foundation, University of Dhaka, Singapore-based Institute of South East Asian Studies (ISEAS), The Asia Foundation, Oceans Institute of Canada, Safe World (UK), and the Department for International Development (DFID).

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3.2.2 Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA)

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA)is a non-profit, independent, and non-governmental research organization, headed by an executive council composed of eminent jurists, lawyers, and diplomats. Following the Liberation War of Bangladesh, BILIA was established on June 30, 1972 by then Minister of Law and then Minister of Foreign Affairs along with other leading national intellectuals in the fields of law and international affairs with an aim to undertake and promote research in these two distinct yet interrelated fields, making it the country's first and oldest civil society think tank. BILIA initiated the first draft of The International Crimes (Tribunals) Act in 1973, which was enacted by the Parliament of Bangladesh in the same year, and it also organized the Third International Criminal Law Conference from December 26-29, 1974 as a step toward the drafting of the statute for an International Criminal Court. Over the years, BILIA has attained recognition as a center of excellence both within and outside the country. The institute carries out policy-oriented advanced research on contemporary issues pertaining to law and international affairs facing Bangladesh and the wider South Asian region. It is a source of independent analysis, informed dialogue, constructive debates, influential ideas, and policy recommendations. Since its inception, BILIA has been working as a center for quality research, judicial training, and dissemination of information through publications, symposiums, workshops, and web-postings in order to invoke public debate and understanding on issues of national importance. BILIA publishes two of the most prestigious and oldest peer-reviewed academic journals of the country: Bangladesh Journal of Law and Journal of International Affairs. The mission of the organization is to promote studies and research in law, international politics, security studies, regional studies, governance, economics, human rights, and jurisprudence. BILIA also produces independent and rigorous analysis of critical global, regional, and country-specific challenges, and offers new ideas to decision-makers and shapers. The institution also enhances linkages and collaboration among institutions focusing on studies related to conflict, conflict resolution, cooperation, stability, and security in South Asia.

The institute has been conceived as a research body or think tank, whose objectives, among others, include promotion and maintenance of research in law and international affairs, and contemporary issues on law, politics, sociology, economics, and jurisprudence, both at the national and international level. A series of conferences, lectures, symposiums, and seminars are also organized for the furtherance of the objectives of the institute. It also facilitates the study of legal international affairs

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questions and exchange of information, knowledge, and thoughts on legal and international affairs to enlarge a body of informed opinion. The institution also invites scholars to avail the facilities offered by the institute and to benefit the institute by their knowledge and experience. Some of the flagship events of BILIA are related to maritime issues, China in global politics, connectivity, and international law.

3.2.3 Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS)

The Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) is a non-party, non-profit organization, and independent think tank. It is a leading institution in Bangladesh for informed analysis of all aspects of the broad spectrum of peace and security studies in the region and beyond. The institute provides a platform for leading strategic thinkers, academics, former members of the civil, foreign, and armed services, and media persons to chalk out a comprehensive framework for peace and security issues. BIPSS has also established two specialized centers within its framework, named Bangladesh Center for Terrorism Research (BCTR) and Bangladesh Center for China Studies (BCCS). The BCTR is the first center of its kind in Bangladesh dedicated to the study and research on terrorism-related issues. The BCCS has been created to understand, study, and analyze Chinese foreign policy and Chinese strategic and security posture. It also aims to study Chinese economic advancement with a view to advocating greater economic and development cooperation between Bangladesh and China as well as China and the greater South Asian region. BIPSS has a four-part mission for creating a dynamic hub of activities by acting as a bridge between academics, researchers, and policy communities, and bringing together people from every relevant discipline as well as from different platforms who study regional and international peace and security issues. The institute seeks to produce a new generation of scholars, analysts, and policymakers that are fully aware of the complexities of international peace and security problems. BIPSS also sponsors projects that will lead to the development of sophisticated strategies and practical policies for enhancing international peace and security in the 21st century.

The organization aims to contribute, through its academic program, to the process of building a community of South Asian scholars with knowledge on issues relating to traditional and non-traditional/human security and transnational security with a common appreciation of the threats to security in South Asia. This is to enhance their effective participation in various policy/governance processes. The institute further assists in the evolution and consolidation of stable, secure, and accountable governments by building the capacity across various sectors. BIPSS also aims to

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periodically produce accurate and timely annotated analysis of the security and human rights situation in the South Asian region, useful to various actors working to deepen democracy and prevent conflict in the region and beyond. BIPSS intends to assist the defense and security sector to review the process globally with particular focus on South Asian countries on the basis of national consensus developed from the bottom up, and encourage dialogue between the South Asian civil society, governments, and the security forces on security sector reform and conflict prevention. Similarly, BIPSS also intends to work with regional institutions on security sector transformation and rights-based development, and encourage them to see the relevance of capacity building for their work. The organization since its establishment has held a number of flagship events based on its research agendas, and it has partnerships with a number of international centers on terrorism research in South Asia, South East Asia, Europe, and the USA, such as the American Security Project, Atlantic Council, National Democratic Institute, Center for Naval Analyses, International Institute of Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Institute of Regional Studies, International Institute for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks, EU-Asia Center, Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance, and University of Glasgow.

Bangladesh and Nepal share cordial relations. Both the countries are also the founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and share membership of a number of multilateral platforms and regional frameworks. This provides mutual ground for the nations to work not only on bilateral issues but also global ones. There are many lessons to learn for Nepal from the recent economic boom of Bangladesh. Hence, it is suggested that IFA collaborate with the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) and Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) on various fronts.

IFA and the Think Tanks from Bangladesh can cooperate to strengthen their networks of contacts by ensuring a certain ratio of contributions from Bangladeshi think tank experts to IFA's publications and also a certain ratio of representatives and speakers for conferences and seminars hosted by IFA. IFA in collaboration with BIISS or BIPSS, both being pioneering and leading Think Tanks of Bangladesh, could host a capacity-building event for researchers to help them enhance their research skills and capabilities as a strategy for improving research quality and regional knowledge sharing.

Collaborating with overseas institutions would definitely help IFA increase its

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visibility as an institution along with cross-pollination of skills and techniques. It would likewise support in promoting the image of the country as a whole in the international arena. Events held by BIPSS, such as Dinner Discussion Club, Cooperation Dialogues, Joint Conferences, and monthly or biannual discussion on 'Bangladesh and the Region', among others, can be referenced for IFA to put together similar events or propose collaboration to convene them. Similarly, IFA's own version of BIISS-held 'Dhaka Global Dialogue' as 'Kathmandu Global Dialogue', BILIA's monthly lecture series as 'IFA's monthly lecture series', academic forums and expert meetings on 'Nepal and the region' can be organized by bringing together national and international scholars, policymakers, and diplomats to enhance cooperation and share Nepal's stand on contemporary issues.

Apart from these, there are other research areas related to regional cooperation, such as disaster management, climate change, trafficking, etc., where different international organizations such as DFID engages with Bangladeshi Think Tanks. Since Nepal is also vulnerable to these non-traditional security challenges, this could also be a potential area for IFA's engagement with suggested Bangladeshi Think Tanks.

Together with BIISS, IFA can work on joint research projects on issues such as regional (SAARC, BIMSTEC) and sub-regional (BBIN) cooperation and the prospects and challenges of energy trade between Bangladesh and Nepal. The research could focus on cooperation between Nepal and Bangladesh in energy and connectivity as the development dynamics and on cross-border energy security. As Bangladesh's power demand is projected to double by 2030, it has plans to import large amounts of power from Nepal and develop hydro power projects. The research can, therefore, explore the prospects of promoting these projects as stepping stones for future sub-regional cooperation in South Asia and economic gains for both the countries.

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3.3 Bhutan

3.3.1 Center for Bhutan and GNH Studies (CBS)

The Center for Bhutan and GNH Studies (CBS) is a social science research institute which conducts inter-disciplinary studies on Bhutan for advancing its social, cultural, economic, and political well-being. It was established in November 1998 by the Royal Government of Bhutan and governed by its rtsa khrims (rules and regulations). Ever since its establishment, it has been conducting research on Bhutanese history, society, culture, religion, economy, politics, and other related themes. Its mandates, given in the rtsa khrims approved by the Royal Government of Bhutan, are to conduct and promote historical and contemporary studies of relevance to Bhutan, carry out policy studies for the Royal Government of Bhutan, and commission research studies by Bhutanese scholars and institutions. The CBS is also keen on collaborating, at its discretion, with other agencies on basic research of mutual interest. The institute also facilitates training and hosts lectures and seminars on research skills by Bhutanese and foreign scholars. It intends to establish itself as a repository of information about research conducted in Bhutan and abroad by institutes and individuals.

CBS is funded by the Royal Government of Bhutan, and its area of research is the study of Gross National Happiness (GNH). GNH study has dominated the research agenda of the CBS, and to reflect this, it has been renamed as the Center for Bhutan & Gross National Happiness Studies (CBS & GNH). It also publishes journals, occasional research papers, and definitive and authoritative documents on Bhutan while encouraging research and publications in Dzongkha and English.

Being Himalayan countries, Nepal and Bhutan share similar vulnerabilities when it comes to the consequences of climate change. Conservation of the environment is one of the four pillars of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness philosophy – a major research interest of CBS. With its extraordinary achievement in environment conservation, Bhutanese researchers from CBS can be an excellent source of expertise for Nepal to up its conservation efforts. Hence, IFA and CBS can have collaborations on research issues related to climate change and livelihoods of the people of the Himalayas.

'Energy, water and ecosystems in Nepal and Bhutan' can be one of the research themes that IFA and CBS together can produce a paper on. Similarly, it is suggested that the Think Tanks have joint annual conferences and seminars on 'Assessing the impacts of climate change on the Himalayan nations and their glaciers', the consequences both Nepal and Bhutan as Himalayan nations are having to bear due to global warming and possible future threats. The paper produced can be a

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starting point for the much-needed trans-Himalayan cooperation on the climate/ environmental front. Gross National Happiness, conservation and tourism are other potential areas for joint engagement. Similarly, Bhutan's power trade with India is also recommended as a case study for Nepal, since India also holds major interest in Nepal's hydro power.

3.4 China

3.4.1 China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)

China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) is one of China's oldest and most influential Think Tanks conducting research and providing expertise on international affairs. It is a longstanding, extensive, and multifunctional research and complex consultation on international strategic and security studies. It covers all geographic areas and major strategic and comprehensive issues in the world. CICIR was created in 1965 and opened up to the public in 1980 as the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations. Since its creation in 1965, it has served the senior-level CCP leadership and has always been bureaucratically subordinate to the Central Committee Foreign Affairs Leading Group (FALG). CICIR comes under the auspices of the Central Committee while being administratively and fiscally under the authority of the Ministry of State Security. For years, it has carried out wide-ranging, thorough, and high-end international academic exchanges. It was authorized to confer Master's and doctoral degrees. In 2015, CICIR was designated as a pilot unit to build up China'stop Think Tanks. One of CICIR's comparative advantages is its bureaucratic proximity to the Foreign Affairs Office, FALG, the Ministry of State Security, and the senior leadership. CICIR receives its money mainly from the Ministry of State Security, while FALG is CICIR's main customer.

CICIR constitutes 10 research institutes and focuses on five research topics the Institute of South Asian Studies centers on the countries, organizations, and regional issues of South Asia as well as the Tibet issue. The Institute of Southeast Asian and Oceania Studies focuses on modern geopolitics, economic development, foreign policy, security situation, and regional affairs of Southeast Asia and Oceania. The Institute of Hong Kong and Macao Studies focuses on relevant players' and international organizations' relations with Hong Kong and Macao SAR; role of Hong Kong and Macao SAR regarding regional cooperation; political, economic, and social situation in Hong Kong and Macao SAR;and "One country, two systems" theory and practice. Others include the Institute of American Studies, Institute of Eurasian Studies, Institute of European Studies, Institute of Northeast Asian Studies, Institute of Middle East Studies, and Institute of Latin American Studies. The major research topics CICIR concentrates on

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are World Political Studies, World Economic Studies, International Security Studies, Sci-Tech and Cyber Security Studies, and Maritime Strategy Studies. Throughout the years, CICIR has held numerous noteworthy events including dialogues and seminars. Some of its flagship events are its joint dialogue with the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Institute for National Security (INSS), and Institute for International Social-Economic Studies (IISE), and others. It publishes three academic journals – Xiandai Guoji Guanxi, Contemporary International Relations, and Guoji Yanjiu Cankao.

3.4.2 China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)

China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)is the oldest think tank of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It conducts research and analysis primarily on medium and long-term policy issues of strategic importance, particularly those concerning international politics and world economy. It also carries out studies and offers policy recommendations on major events and pressing issues. The institute was founded in 1956 as the Institute of International Relations (IIR), China Academy of Sciences, which later changed to the Institute of International Relations. It assumed the present name in December 1986. In 1998, the China Center for International Studies (CCIS), formerly a research institution under the State Council, was incorporated into the CIIS. Major funding comes from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. The CIIS consists of nearly one hundred researchers and other professionals. Among them are senior diplomats, leading area-study specialists, and pre-eminent experts in the major fields of foreign affairs. The CIIS staff also includes rotational assignments from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter increasingly uses CIIS expertise and has made the think tank the key Track II organization to carry out exchanges for China. The president of CIIS is traditionally a diplomat.

The institute consists of eight departments and 10 research centers. They include the Department of Global Strategy, Department of Information and Contingencies Analysis, Department of American Studies, Department of Asia-Pacific Security and Cooperation, Department of EU Studies, Department of Developing Countries Studies, Department of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Studies, and the Department of World Economy and Development Studies. In addition, the research centers comprise the Center for China-US Relations, Center for Maritime Security and Cooperation, Center for Global Governance, Center for International Energy Strategy, Center for Arms Control and International Security, Center for Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Center for the Belt and Road Initiative, Center for China-Asian African Cooperation, Global Center for Mekong Studies (China Center), and China-US Young Leaders Dialogue. Besides, there are research centers focused respectively on the

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study of the European Union, the Middle East, the South Pacific, China's Energy Strategy, Periphery Security, and World Economy and Security. CIIS has successfully convened various webinars, seminars, dialogues, and conferences throughout the years, and held a number of flagship events. CIIS publishes commentaries, articles, reports, monographs, and journals. International Studies is the bimonthly journal of CIIS, which provides an influential forum for the discussion of important international issues. Similarly, China International Studies (English-language) journal is another leading journal of CIIS and is the first English academic publication in China on diplomacy and international politics for formal circulation. The institute is affiliated to different government commissions and associations, such as China National Commission for Pacific Economic Cooperation, China Commission of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, China International Studies and Academic Exchange Foundation, and China Arms Control and Disarmament Association.

3.4.3 Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies (RDCY)

Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China (RDCY) was established on January 19, 2013. RDCY has established a stable cooperation mechanism with major Think Tanks in more than 40 countries. It has undertaken research-related activities in more than 20 countries, including the United States, Brazil, the United Kingdom, and Iran. RDCY is a significant policy advisory organ for more than 10 ministries and commissions. The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC), the General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the Publicity Department of the CPC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Bank of China, China Securities Regulatory Commission, China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, International Department of the Central Committee of the CPC and Cyberspace Administration of China, and the Ministry of Education are some of them. RDCY concentrates its research on areas such as financial development, global governance, great power relations, and macro policies. The institute comprises seven departments and operates four research centers. The research departments include the Center for Eco-Financial Studies, Global Governance Research Center, China-US People-to-People Exchange Research Center, and China-Russia People-to-People Exchange Research Center. It runs research programs on global governance, Belt and Road Initiative, eco-finance, and major power relations. The institute has been able to successfully organize a number of noteworthy webinars, seminars, dialogues, and conferences. Two of its flagship events include the Davos Summit and Suzhou Silk Road Forum 2020 held with the theme 'The 14th Five-Year Plan and High-Quality Development of Belt and Road'.

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RDCY's main funding comes from the Shanghai Chongyang Investment Group Co., Ltd, which was donated to Renmin University of China and established the education fund to operate it. The Center for Eco-Financial Studies, under RDCY, has been donated by Beijing Qiaonyu Foundation that undertakes the function of the Secretariat of Green Finance Committee of China Society for Finance and Banking (GFC). Likewise, the Global Governance Research Center was donated by JuFeng Capital, Co. Ltd., and He Yafei, former Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, serves as the director.

3.4.4 Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS)

The Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University (PKU) was officially founded in October 2013. IISS was the former Center of International and Strategic Studies of Peking University established in May 2007. Its Board of Directors is composed of senior scholars and experts in and out of PKU. IISS aims to promote the development of academic research and policy research related to world politics, international security, and global strategy, etc. It focuses on the analysis of international situations that China faces as well as the international strategy of related countries. Then based on such analyses, it publishes or presents research results to relevant authorities that are characterized by policy significance and future vision. Committed to providing intellectual support for China's decision-making on international strategy, IISS also engages in the teaching of relevant subjects. It also helps the public to understand issues related to national security and international strategy in a sound, correct, and reasonable way.

IISS has been successfully undertaking and accomplishing many projects of the National Social Science Fund of China and key projects on philosophy and social science of the Ministry of Education. It also provides research and decision-making consultation services for the Foreign Affairs Office of the Communist Party, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the National Defense University, and the Academy of Military Science of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Foreign policy, great power strategy, regional security, global governance, and other important theories are the focus of its major research. Its research results include the frequently published Briefing on International Strategy Studies, the annually published Review of China's International Strategy (English and Chinese), International Strategy Research Series of Peking University, and research reports entrusted by government sectors, enterprises, and public institutions. Some of its major publications are Strategic Research Series, Think Tank Digest, and Think Tank Frontier.

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3.4.5 Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS)

The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Sichuan University, is a major policy think tank in Sichuan, China, specializing in South Asian studies. Its endeavors toward enhancing cooperation with South Asia has played a major role in making it an effective and influential South Asian Studies Agency. ISAS, Sichuan University, was founded in 1978, reforming the preceding India Studies Office (est. in 1964). ISAS has the most advanced research facilities and holds great influence in the international South Asian academic circle. Additionally, ISAS has been putting remarkable efforts on framing an extensive opening-up strategy for China, striking a balance between land and sea, and the eastern and western regions. The institution aims to become a vital think tank in Sichuan's Provincial Government and Communist Party of China's (CPC) Sichuan Committee. ISAS has made significant contributions toward stimulating Sichuan-South Asian economic and trade cooperation, including offering advice and intellectual support. ISAS has always adhered to the policy of "focusing on the study of political and economic status quo, as well as historical and cultural status".

ISAS consists of four departments. The Department of International Economic Relations focuses its research on the theory and practice of international economic relations and particularly highlights research on foreign economic relations of South Asian countries. Likewise, the Department of Major-Power Relations and International Security pays attention to emerging international issues in the international system and combines China's strategic concerns with focus on studying the diplomatic and security strategies of major South Asian countries, the strategic relationship between China and India, and China's neighboring countries. The Department of International Social and Cultural relations on the other hand concentrates on the religions and cultures of South Asia as well as the on exchanges and connections between China and South Asia on religious and cultural matters as the main research objects. The institute concentrates its research on the development of foreign policy and foreign relations of South Asian countries, emphasizing the political and diplomatic relations, foreign economic and trade relations, and developments of regional cooperation of various countries, as well as their bilateral and multilateral relations with China. ISAS also has an exchange program with scholars and students from Nepal. Huge numbers of Nepali students visit ISAS annually under fellowships. The institute has held numerous events and lectures in the past, inviting top scholars from across the world and South Asia. It often organizes lectures with senior researchers, scholars, leaders, and experts. ISAS publishes academic monographs, academic papers, and research reports. The institute also publishes an academic journal called the South Asian Studies Quarterly.

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3.4.6 Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS)

Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS) was established in 1960 and has maintained strong research and analysis capability ever since. It is smaller than CICIR or CIIS. SIIS is a government-affiliated high-caliber think tank dedicated to informing government decision-making by conducting policy-oriented studies on world politics, economics, foreign policy, and international security. SIIS maintains intensive and extensive exchanges and cooperation with research institutions at home and abroad, bolstering China's international influence and soft power. SIIS lies under the administration of the Shanghai Municipal Government, from where it gets most of its funding. SIIS has close relations with the top Chinese leadership in Beijing that originates in Shanghai. Its influence can vary considerably, depending on the composition of the politburo and other senior-level bodies. It is currently led by Yang Jiemian, the brother of Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. SIIS was ranked among the top 10 Chinese Think Tanks in 2006, and one of the top 10 global Think Tanks (non-American) in 2008. SIIS specializes mainly in US-China and Asian affairs.

The research focus of SIIS is on International Relations and Foreign Affairs, politics and government, economy and trade, defense and security, global governance, energy and environment, Cross-Strait relations, Hong Kong and Macao studies, and history and culture. SIIS has also set up six in-house research platforms – People's Diplomacy of Shanghai, Center for the Study of Chinese Diplomatic Theory and Practice, Center for World Politics and Political Parties, Center for China-South Asia Cooperation, Center for BRI and Shanghai Studies, and Center for International Cyber Governance. In addition, SIIS is an institutional member of the Shanghai International Strategic Studies Association and the Shanghai International Relations Association. Two of its flagship journals are Global Review (bimonthly in Chinese) and the China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies. Some of the flagship events held by SIIS are the China-Norway Dialogue and many others held with reputed organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), African Policy Institute (API), Institute of Diplomacy, International Studies (IDIS), The Carter Center, and others.

Relations between Nepal and China have been progressively enriched over the years. Nepal has and is doing well out of the strong trade ties with China, and this has benefitted both the nations. Prospects for more of such partnerships can be further looked into through academic and expert level discussions. Currently there are a number of Chinese projects being carried out in Nepal; some have been of great benefit while some are in a limbo due to the financing modality. Scholars from Chinese Think

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Tanks could share a seat at the table with IFA's scholars for a scholarly debate,which would help communicate the interests and clarify visions and procedures of both the nations and ensure the effectiveness of such projects.

It is recommended that IFA partner with Chinese Think Tanks to have research collaboration on issues related to the economy and cross-border trade while exploring possibilities for more collaboration. IFA may partner with three major research institutes of China – China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), and Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China. Engaging with CIIS based in Beijing and with ISAS based in Chengdu would bring tremendous opportunities for collaboration. IFA can engage with CIIS on issues related to political and economic relations while with ISAS, it can engage on issues related to the economy and culture as Sichuan and Nepal have greater proximity.

IFA is suggested to sign a MoU and have regular exchange of scholars and hold joint events on Nepal-China relations. ISAS and IFA can further work in areas including soft power, people-to-people relations, and issues related to Buddhism as it has been focusing in recent times. Apart from these, both institutes can scrutinize ideas and possibilities to enhance tourism and economic activities between Nepal and Sichuan. The broad research areas where IFA can engage with CIIS and ISAS are Nepal-China economic engagement, Nepal-China connectivity, and prospects of trans-Himalaya economic corridors. IFA and RDCY can have joint research collaboration on economic issues related to India and Nepal, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and trans-Himalaya connectivity. IFA and RDCY should engage in research on 'Nepal-China connectivity', possibility of having Chinese investment in major sectors like hydro power, tourism, infrastructure, and others which can bring rapid economic transformation to Nepal.

Like the flagship events held by RDCY, IFA can organize events like the 'South Asia Regional Dialogue' or 'Nepal Annual Summit'. RDCY has been regularly organizing Silk Road Forums, hence IFA too can propose a joint Silk Road forum with RDCY on Belt and Road cooperation. Furthermore, as with CIIS, IFA could hold international symposiums on Nepal's participation and role in SAARC, UN peacekeeping, BIMSTEC, etc., and an annual young leaders' dialogue. Some of the flagship events held by IISS include North Pavilion Dialogues and North Pavilion Seminars and Symposiums, and IFA could take a cue from them to put together research policy dialogues and seminars.

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pamphlets, and others. Furthermore, the institute is keen on establishing contacts with organizations, and arranging conferences and seminars to discuss and study Indian policy on international affairs.

As part of its mandate to promote India's relations with other countries through study, research, discussions, lectures, exchange of ideas, and information, the ICWA has signed 53 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with partner institutions in various countries. It has also signed MoUs with 21 national academic and research institutions to collaborate with them in organizing national and international conferences throughout the nation; spread awareness amongst students, faculty, researchers, and policymakers; provide a platform for the generation of new ideas; and strengthen the understanding of international politics and Indian foreign policy. It has also been supporting international studies in different parts of the country, book projects and essay writing competitions, and others on issues related to international affairs. The research interest of the ICWA includes: American Studies, Indo-Pacific Strategy, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia, Europe, Pakistan, Israel, and ASEAN. Some of its flagship events include the Asian Relations Conference and Conference on China. The think tank is funded by the Government of India, mostly by the Ministry of External Affairs.

3.5.4 Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS)

The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) was founded in 1996 as an independent think tank by former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer PR Chari and Major General (Retd) Dipankar Banerjee to develop an alternative framework for peace and security in South Asia and the extended neighborhood. It aims to bring policy-relevant research into scholarly and public debate through emphasis on events, capacity building of the next generation of thought leaders, and media and online outreach. The IPCS is a not-for-profit research organization that does not hold institutional positions. As a result, its analyses incorporate all points of view. It relies on support from foundations, corporations, governments, and individuals for specific projects with the understanding that such funding will not affect research findings. Its research is carried out under the aegis of four broad themes, each with its own dedicated program and staff. The four broad themes constitute Nuclear Security Program (NSP), Southeast Asia Research Program (SEARP), China Research Program (CRP), and Centre for Internal and Regional Security (IReS). The main objectives of these programs are innovation in research by encouraging competition, and often contrarian approaches, to problem solving and policy analysis, and facilitating national, regional, and international dialogue on traditional and non-traditional

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security and politics in South Asia and the extended neighborhood.

The IPCS organizes seminars and discussions on current issues and contemporary developments. These are aimed at both Indian and foreign scholars to disseminate the findings to get peer feedback from the Delhi policy community. These also include closed door consultations, or briefings, based on specific requests from visiting foreign delegations or governments. As part of its research, the IPCS closely interacts with a wide range of governments, militaries, institutions as well as policy and academic peers, both Indian and foreign. Some of its past and current collaborations and networks include Rout ledge, Stimson Center, Institute for Security Studies, Sandia National laboratories, Brookings, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, and Japan Foundation to name a few. Over the years, it has established a reputation for the quality of its research and publications. Besides publications by its faculty members, over the past decade, over 40 books on wide-ranging subjects have been published. It also publishes issue briefs, special reports, commentaries, discussion reports, and research papers.

3.5.5 Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA)

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) is a non-partisan, autonomous body dedicated to objective research and policy-relevant studies on all aspects of defense and security. Its mission is to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defense and security-related issues. MP-IDSA has a well-qualified multi-disciplinary research faculty drawn from the academia, defense forces, and the civil services, representing a diversity of views. Research at the institute is driven by a comprehensive agenda and by the need to provide impartial analyses and policy recommendations. Policy recommendations and analyses are disseminated through the institute's journals, monographs, briefs, and books. In addition, the news media also carry the views of the institute's experts in the form of op-eds, interviews, and debate participation. The think tank is funded by the Indian Ministry of Defense and functions autonomously. Initially known as Defense Studies and Analyses, it was renamed Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) in February 2020. It has massive infrastructure, a well- equipped modern library, conference facilities, guest houses, and accommodation for scholars. MP-IDSA was established as a registered society in New Delhi on November 11, 1965. The institute has served as a forum to debate important aspects of national and international security. The institute conducts several national and international conferences every year, and

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regularly holds round tables and workshops on important developments. The Weekly Fellows' Seminars also serve as a forum in which the institute's experts interact with a cross-section of analysts, scholars, journalists, and policymakers. Its mission is to provide objective assessments of issues relating to national and international security. MP-IDSA provides annual training programs to civilian and military officers of the Government of India, and lectures by experts from the institute and from outside form the core of these programs.

MP-IDSA has a number of centers: Counter Terrorism, Defense Economics and Industry, East Asia, Europe and Eurasia, Internal Security, Military Affairs, Non-Traditional Security, North America, Nuclear and Arms Control, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania Strategic Technologies, and West Asia. MP-IDSA has three annual conferences –Asian Security Conference, South Asia Conference, and West Asia Conference. Some of its major projects include Indigenous Historical Knowledge, Pakistan Project, Nuclear History Project, Counter Radicalization Task Force, and Manohar Parrikar IDSA Cyber Security Centre of Excellence.

3.5.6 Observer Research Foundation (ORF)

Initiated in the 1990's, Observer Research Foundation (ORF) was formed, and brought together, for the first time, by leading Indian economists and policymakers to present the agenda for India's economic reforms. Over the past three decades, ORF has acquired an obvious global footprint. Today the organization plays a seminal role in building political and policy consensus that enables India to interact with the world. The institution started out primarily looking inward and engaging with domestic reforms, and steadily forging global partnerships. With the increasing footprint of India and its global affairs, ORF continues to push normative boundaries, bring new ideas into the policy discourse, and provide a platform to a new generation of thinkers. It is supported in its mission by leading intellectuals, academicians, policymakers, business leaders, institutions, and civil society actors. Reliance Industries (RIL) is their key funder, and ORF has expanded its branches in different parts of India and the USA. ORF's aim is to encourage voices from all quarters, geographies, and genders, both those that fall in and those that question dominant narratives. It is this plurality of thought and voice — in a country of over a billion individuals — that ORF seeks to carry abroad, while simultaneously bringing contemporary global debates to India. ORF seeks to lead and aid policy thinking towards building a strong and prosperous India in a fair and equitable world. It sees India as a country poised to play a leading role in the knowledge age — a role in which it shall be increasingly called upon to proactively ideate in order to shape global conversations, even as it sets course

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along its own trajectory of long-term sustainable growth. It provides non-partisan, independent, well-researched analyses and inputs to diverse decision-makers in governments, business communities, academia, and civil society around the world.

The organizations' research interests include climate change, food and environment, defense and security, development and partnerships, domestic politics and governance, economics and finance, energy, gender, healthcare, international affairs, and media and internet. To effectively cover these interests the think tank works on the following major programs: Strategic studies, tech and media, energy, climate change and sustainable development, economy and growth, and political economy. These programs cover Africa, the Americas, China, European Union, India's neighborhood, Russia and Eurasia, South Asia, the Pacific, East and Southeast Asia, USA and Canada, and West Asia. Among the various events organized by ORF, some of the flagship events include Raisina Dialogue, Asian Forum on Global Governance, Colaba Conversation, CyFy, CyFy Africa, Dhaka Global Dialogue, Kalpana Chawla Annual Space Policy Dialogue, Kigali Global Dialogue, and Tackling Insurgent Ideologies. Some of the partners and collaborators of ORF include Apple, The Asia Foundation, The Asia Group, Bill and Melina Gates Foundation, British High Commission, YouTube, Children Investment Fund Foundation, Council of Europe, Council on Foreign Relations, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Ministry of External Affairs, India, Ministry of External Affairs of Japan, and Twitter.

3.5.7 Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF)

Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent, non-partisan institution that promotes quality research and in-depth studies and is a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. It strives to bring together the best minds in India to ideate on key national and international issues; promote initiatives that further the cause of peace and global harmony; monitor social, economic, and political trends that have a bearing on India's unity and integrity; analyze the causes for social and ethnic conflicts leading to extremism and offer policy alternatives; interact with civil society and offer institutional support for exchange of ideas and interaction among conflicting groups; critique public policy and the working of democratic institutions and constitutional bodies; and evolve benchmarks for good governance and efficiency in public institutions. Vivekananda International Foundation interacts with the diplomatic community in New Delhi to project India's viewpoint and to understand the views and perceptions of other nations to further India's political, strategic, economic, and civilizational interests. VIF engages policymakers on issues of topical interest and sharesits views and concerns with them. VIF prepares policy briefs for limited circulation among

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people in government, parliamentarians, members of the judiciary, those heading and working in constitutionally mandated institutions, and the civil society, and develop institutionalized contacts with academic bodies, research institutions, selected Indian and foreign Think Tanks, universities and organizations representing the Indian diaspora for cross fertilization of ideas, exchange of scholars, and sharing of information and experience. The foundation seeks to meet its objectives through six centers of study that comprise the Centre for National Security and Strategic Studies, Center for International Relations and Diplomacy, Center for Neighborhood Studies, Center for Governance and Political Studies, Center for Economic Studies, and Center for Historical and Civilizational Studies. VIF concentrates on seven areas of study, including national security and strategic studies, international relations/diplomacy, technological and scientific studies, neighborhood studies, governance and political studies, economic studies, historical and civilizational studies, and media studies.

The foundation organizes events, conferences, lectures, interactions, seminars, and discussions, and invites scholars and subject specialists for exchange of ideas. It organizes exhibitions, cultural events, training workshops for students and other targeted groups, and yoga classes to involve citizens across age groups and professions in the task of national regeneration. Some of its flagship events include the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Conference, Round Table Discussions series, and Meeting of Heads of Think Tanks. VIF publishes books, monographs, policy briefs, commentaries, VIF papers, VIF reports, book reviews, and special reports on various topics.

Nepal and India have deep social, economic, political, and strategic ties. Hence, it would be worthwhile to engage in research with Indian Think Tanks on these broad areas. It is recommended that IFA engage with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), and Observer Research Foundation (ORF). Major funds of the ICWA and MP-IDSA come from the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defense respectively. IFA and the ICWA can work on research related to Nepal-India political relations, such as revisiting the treaties, opportunities of Buddhist and Ramayan circuits, water sharing, and other aspects of bilateral relations while MP-IDSA can work on security issues, such as security of border areas of both the countries. Both the countries are also affected by cross-border crimes, trafficking, and smuggling, which can be research topics for joint studies. IFA and IDSA can also hold regular interaction on issues related to border security. Similarly, ORF is one of the most dynamic and successful Think Tanks and has been quite successful in managing funds from domestic, government, and international donors. IFA can also look at similar

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possibilities for external funding with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. IFA and ORF can go for research collaboration on climate change, energy, and the economy as these are areas of great interest for Nepal. ORF and IFA can work on joint research to explore cross-border connectivity between the two countries, trade deficit, and other issues.

IDSA has a Weekly Fellow's seminar, which not only updates the research skills of scholars but also generates research papers. Holding such weekly discussions with scholars on contemporary issues can be beneficial and also be used to provide suggestions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similarly, MP-IDSA holds an annual Asian Security Conference (of high-level scholars from around the world) and the South Asian Conference (of scholars from South Asian countries). As mentioned earlier, such kinds of flagship events are important to bring together different Think Tanks, scholars, experts, and policymakers. These activities are beneficial for researchers as they can engage with scholars from different countries and exchange ideas, which should contribute to enhancing the quality of the findings. Since MP-IDSA is a government-funded think tank like IFA, it would be convenient to engage the two on joint research. They can collaborate in areas such as counter terrorism, internal security, non-traditional security issues, and South Asia. MP-IDSA also gives importance to indigenous historical knowledge where they conduct research on Chanakya/ Kautilaya Arthasatra, and other strategic thinkers of the Indian sub-continent. IFA can also focus on the use of the Panchsheel of Buddhism in international relations, as well as the teachings of Divya Upadesh (Divine Counsel) of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, and others.

Similarly, ORF's 'Raisina Dialogue' can be an inspirational model for IFA to carry out events of a similar scale and reach. This can significantly feed into greater international visibility of the institute. Carried out over the course of four days annually, the multilateral conference can be a catalyst in beginning a cross-sectoral discourse on the geopolitics, economy, and foreign policy of Nepal. Bringing together various heads of state, cabinet ministers, and local government officials, the event can be joined by leaders from the private sector, media, and academia. The conference can be hosted by IFA in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, further incorporating support from a number of national and international institutions, organizations, and individuals. IFA should also organize such annual events with reputed Think Tanks of the world. Similarly, IFA can also initiate a scholar's exchange program with scholars from Indian Think Tanks, which will help in building the capacity of the IFA researchers.

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3.6 Maldives

3.6.1 Foreign Service Institute of Maldives (FOSIM)

The Foreign Service Institute of Maldives (FOSIM) was established on January 16, 2014 by the President of the Maldives, His Excellency Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, under the administrative structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and formally registered at the Department of Higher Education as a diplomatic training institute with the central aim of promoting efficiency and professionalism in the Maldives Foreign Service sector. The institute conducts training on enhancing knowledge and skills on foreign affairs, professional skills development, and undertaking policy research, thus, helping to create vibrant Foreign Service cadres in the country. FOSIM aims to be a reputed national institute for nurturing a professional Foreign Service corps and undertake research on pertinent foreign policy issues. In achieving this, the organization intends to provide specialized skill development training to Foreign Service officers and in-service career development training to mid-career diplomats and executives, as required by the changing needs of the Foreign Service. Similarly, it organizes and conducts Foreign Service and Foreign Service promotion exams. The institute also promotes learning and acquisition of languages essential for more effective and efficient diplomacy with bilateral and international partners. FOSIM intends to stimulate awareness and debate amongst government institutions on foreign policy and undertake research and analysis on priority issues in the foreign policy of the Maldives. It also seeks to provide policy alternatives for the foreign policy process, including goal setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy enactment, policy management, policy assessment, and evaluation.

The institute is governed by an Advisory Board with major focus on: Training and professional development, language studies, transition Center, and research archives and library. Under these focus areas, FOSIM carries out various activities that include the Skill Development Program, Professional Development Program, Ambassador Briefing Program, Distinguished Speaker Series, Heads of Missions Meeting, Pre-Posting Orientation Program, Staff Development Program, Foreign Service Exam, and Annual Conference of Deans and Directors of Diplomatic Training Institutes.

As the economy of the Maldives is primarily driven by its tourism sector, Nepal too as a tourism hub can learn and engage with the Maldives on similar fronts. While the Maldives targets high-end tourists, Nepal attracts low-end tourists. The tourism success story of the Maldives gives many of its regional competitors a run for their money. It goes on to show how imperative it is for government bodies and tourism stakeholders to work together in terms of policy making as well as marketing efforts.

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Together with the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA), IFA can embark on joint research projects, seminars, and campaigns by partnering with FOISM. Close collaboration with the Tourism Board, Civil Aviation, and stakeholders from the Maldives and Nepal can open up various prospects for IFA and the tourism sector of Nepal. An international academic research conference hosted in Nepal through IFA's collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal could help promote Nepal as a tourism destination among the attendees and participants. At the same time, IFA's research collaboration with institutes like FOISM can produce more informed and effective tourism policies to give a boost to the post-pandemic tourism of Nepal. The study could focus on exploring and learning the right approaches to work toward the sustainability of the tourism sector in Nepal. As both FOSIM and IFA have been undertaking a number of training programs, these two Think Tanks can engage in seminars and joint research. Similarly, policy recommendations to the MoCTCA can be made from the study.

While Nepali workers are increasingly being attracted to resorts in the Maldives in recent years, migrant workers face a range of issues, on which both the institutions could work on. As FOSIM also works in providing policy alternatives to its government, IFA and FOSIM can together conduct research and conferences to explore ways to ensure safe, regular, and managed migration and urge the governments to analyze existing policies, data, and trends regarding foreign workers. Furthermore, there can be exchange programs and trainings between IFA staff/ MOFA officials and FOSIM. Moreover, some FOSIM activities like the Ambassadors Briefing Program and Distinguished Speakers Series are worth emulating.

3.7 Nepal

3.7.1 Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA)

The Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA) is an independent, non-partisan foreign policy think tank, based in Kathmandu, Nepal. AIDIA provides a platform for policymakers, academicians, and industry leaders from around the world to come together to debate, discuss, and exchange views on contemporary geopolitical and geo-economic issues confronting the international community. It seeks to do so by facilitating effective engagement through various AIDIA forums. It is actively engaged in providing policy analysis, facilitating diplomatic dialogue, and promoting entrepreneurial engagement among all major actors and institutions, native or with an interest in Asia.

Its research concentrates on diverse topics, including climate change, cyber security

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and technology, economics and trade, energy, international affairs, Nepal's foreign policy, security and defense, connectivity, domestic politics, and foreign policy of China and India. AIDIA has hosted several webinars, dialogues, and forums. Some of its flagship events are the Nepal Foreign Policy Conference, Nepal-India Think Summit, Nepal-Bangladesh Business Forum, AIDIA Dialogue, etc.

3.7.2 Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS)

Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS)is a multidisciplinary institute, a statutory research center under Tribhuvan University. The institute conducts independent research and deliberation on issues and studies in the social sciences. Major research works at CNAS are undertaken by the faculties of the university. In 2018, the center revived its three desks of the 1980s – India, China, and Japan – that comprise a team of 10 full-time faculty members and 20 support staff. Established in the 1960's as the Institute of Nepal Studies, the center was renamed the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies in 1972, and later in 1977 was converted into the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) as a purely research center. The priorities of its research include study and assessment of the social response to development programs and its implications in terms of various policy options. Likewise, it examines localized Nepali society to arrive at a fuller appreciation and understanding of traditional cultures that contribute to national identity, and conflict studies that covers the security of small states, politics, development, and inter-state relations in South Asia. Its study areas are focused on the political, economic, and strategic developments in the Asian region. Apart from that, it focuses on culture and heritage studies, which covers art and archaeology, history, historical cultural forms, religion, folk studies, social change and development studies, Himalayan studies, and Nepali political studies.

Over the years, CNAS has published more than 300 books, substantially contributing to the epistemology and understanding of Nepali society, culture, history, linguistics, contemporary politics, and Asian studies. Its biannual multi-disciplinary journal, Contributions to Nepalese Studies, has been publishing Nepali and English articles since 1973 and is an important journal of Nepali studies in Nepal and abroad.

3.7.3 Center for South Asian Studies (CSAS)

Center for South Asian Studies (CSAS) is an independent, non-political, secular, research think tank. The institute has been organizing conferences and conducting research on South Asian regional cooperation, peace and conflict in South Asia, small arms proliferation, trade and connectivity, and strategic issues concerning South Asian countries as well as Nepal's conduct of international relations. CSAS is

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involved in various national, regional, and international networks. The institute is a member of the Regional Network of Strategic Study Centers (RNSSC) led by NESA Center, Washington D.C. It is also the Convener of the Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT) supported by the Political Dialogue Asia Program of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The organization is also a founding member of the South Asian Regional Research Forum (SARRF) and the Nepal Security Sector Network (NSSN), Kathmandu. In partnership with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, a German political foundation, CSAS has implemented various projects, such as Nepal's National Interests. Some of its flagship events include the Regional Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation, and CSAS-COSATT Regional Conference on Refugees in South Asia.

3.7.4 China Study Center (CSC)

China Study Center (CSC) is the premier China-focused organization in Nepal. Its mission is to promote imaginatively knowledge-based, multi-dimensional policy dialogue and study activities on China, and more specifically between China and Nepal. It serves as a common forum for all intellectuals who abide by the provisions of the CSC constitution, are concerned with and interested in China, and value China-Nepal relations and the integration of Nepal with Chinese modernization and reform processes that have transcended various regions of Asia. The institute seeks to study and research historical, geographical, religious, cultural, social, governance, external, environmental, political, and economic relations of China and disseminates the research findings. It further aims to arrange the exchange of fact-finding and study visits between the two countries that work as a major tool for developing and forging strategic multi-level and multi-dimensional communication to enhance bilateral understanding and cooperation. Its work is academically and professionally oriented with the rigor and sophistication of public or cultural diplomacy. The major program thrusts of CSC are promotion of understanding by academic and policy exchanges and study visits, interactions such as policy dialogue, seminars, and conferences on identified themes, synthesis and dissemination of research and study results, advancement of knowledge and informed resources base in the form of e-communication, and consultation on strategic and development aspects of China and Nepal-China relations.

The center conducts bilateral, regional, and international policy dialogue, discussions, conferences, and seminars within the wider framework of China affairs, and specifically in the context of Nepal's China relations, relations with the adjoining Tibet Autonomous Region, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces. Its activity areas include bilateral exchange of visits and dialogue, talk programs and seminars,and informal and

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formal meetings of senior Chinese officials and scholars with their CSC counterparts. CSC has partnered and jointly undertaken programs with the China Association for International Friendly Contact (CAIFC); China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR); China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), Beijing; Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Nepal; Nepal Council of World Affairs;Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu; Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), Kathmandu; CCTV, Beijing; Xuan Zang Study Center and CIIS in Beijing; and Fudan University, Shanghai to name a few.

3.7.5 Global Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (GIIS)

Global Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (GIIS) is an autonomous, not-for-profit research institute that is keen on promoting and undertaking interdisciplinary research to produce credible, salient, and legitimate knowledge that catalyzes transformative change in the developmental policies and practices in Nepal and elsewhere. GIIS intends to profile a developmental agenda that is socially just, environmentally sustainable, and economically viable through profound engagement with decision-makers and multiple stakeholders. The organization has an interdisciplinary team with experience in generating extensive research in all of its thematic interests. GIIS aspires for a world where humans use their intelligence to live a happier, healthier, and more prosperous life without harming the needs of all surviving and continually evolving life-forms. To attain this vision, the GIIS mission is to catalyze socially just and ecologically sustainable development in Nepal while advancing the well-being of the Nepali people through interdisciplinary, research-based knowledge generation, and leadership development.

The purpose of GIIS is to guide and nurture a new generation of innovative leaders and thinkers in sustainability science. It also seeks to initiate and endorse multi-level collaborations to enhance policy and governance mechanisms as well as technological change, and embrace globally relevant and locally applicable innovative practices. The research projects under the institute focus on climate change and land-use change, geo-hazards and disasters, natural resources and environment, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, global health and nutrition, and gender equality. The institute over the last 10 years has published more than 400 research publications primarily in high impact journals. The scientific studies conducted by the institute have been featured in several national and international media outlets, such as the journal Nature, The New York Times, Scientific American, and National Geographic. It produces several journal articles, policy briefs, op-eds, books and chapters, reports, and a newsletter as part of its publications.

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3.7.6 Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS)

The Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) is an independent, non-partisan, and not-for-profit think tank headquartered in Kathmandu. Since its inception in 1979, it has proven its commitment to research and policy advocacy based on evidence and a holistic approach to sustainable development. Leading up to 2030, the vision of IIDS is to build on its storied legacy of over 40 years to reorient and consolidate policy priorities across Nepal and South Asia. Its goal is to seek greater development impact through research, advocacy, and incubation of innovation. It seeks to be one of the region's leading institutes that contributes to evidence-based policymaking; trains professionals; and broadens public understanding of sustainable development challenges and solutions in the 21st century. IIDS works with the Government of Nepal, international organizations like the United Nations, World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank, and a large number of bilateral development partners as well as Think Tanks and NGOs. In 2016, IIDS signed a MoU with Kathmandu University, among others, to launch Nepal's first graduate program in public policy –Master in Public Policy and Management (MPPM). IIDS has also started a series of short, non-degree executive courses in partnership with Tribhuvan University. The goal of these courses is to provide students and practitioners with cutting- edge policy knowledge in a cost-effective manner.

IIDS works on different themes, such as economic policy, human assets, sustainability, strategic affairs, and governance. Over the past 40 years, the impact of IIDS has been extensive through dozens of projects and hundreds of knowledge products shared across society to influence reasoned policymaking and make development effective. Its studies and surveys have spanned macro-economics, public finance, education, agriculture and rural development, food and nutrition, population and health, trade, energy, regional cooperation, women and development, poverty alleviation, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace. IIDS is experienced in organizing flagship policy conferences and seminars and likewise hosts distinguished lecture series by inviting international scholars and policymakers of renown. IIDS also convenes monthly webinar series on politics, economy, and public policy and another webinar series on human development. IIDS has partnered with prominent organizations, The Asia Foundation, Plan International, UNDP, ILO, GIZ, OXFAM, World Bank, USAID, UNICEF, and IFPRI to name a few, working on diverse research projects.

3.7.7 Martin Chautari

Martin Chautari was founded in 1991 in the form of an informal discussion group in Kathmandu. The platform since its initial days allowed development professionals,

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social activists, and academics to meet and share insights and experiences related to Nepali development and society. The founders of this discussion group included Nepali power engineer Bikas Pandey, Norwegian engineer Odd Hoftun, and Norwegian academic Martin Hoftun. In 1995, the name 'Martin Chautari' was adopted in memory of Martin Hoftun, who was tragically killed in an airplane accident in 1992. Initially managed by the Center for Social Research and Development for six years, in 2002 Chautari was registered as a separate non-government organization (NGO) in Kathmandu.

From the very beginning, Martin Chautari began publishing books in the Chautari Book Series. Most of the books have been published in the thematic areas in which Martin Chautari has worked institutionally. A total of 100 books have been published in this series by the year 2020, among which 70 percent are in the Nepali language. Building upon its high degree of credibility as a non-partisan, rooted research center, Martin Chautari has been publishing policy briefs since 2009. The major research areas of Martin Chautari are democracy and governance, media, and education and livelihood. The research papers are published through Chautari Book Series, policy briefs, journals, bibliographies/author indexes and reports. Martin Chautari publishes two journals. The first is the bi-lingual (English and Nepali) semi-annual journal Studies in Nepali History and Society, established in 1996, and published by Mandala Book Point from Kathmandu. The second is the Nepali language annual journal Samaj Adhyayan, which was established in 2006 as Media Adhyayan (its title was changed in 2016). It is published by Chautari itself. Martin Chautari partners with several organizations of Nepal and abroad, such as Tribhuvan University, National Endowment for Democracy, Ford Foundation, Foundation Open Society Institute, Embassy of India, Danida Fellowship Center, International Center for Transitional Justice, ISET Nepal, Norwegian Church Aid, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), The Asia Foundation, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), University of Edinburgh, Action Aid Nepal, Japan Foundation Asia Center, Lutheran World Federation, and others.

3.7.8 Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA)

Established in 1948, Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA) is a non-profit organization with a commitment to foreign policy deliberations and other key issues of global concern. The think tank came into being with the benefaction of late King Tribhuvan, late King Mahendra, and late King Birendra. Former King Gyanendra had granted patronage to the Council as the Head of the State. The institute is keen on contributing to peace by promoting mutual cooperation among the nations of the

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world. The NCWA also seeks to exchange support and collaboration with national and international organizations having similar objectives. On a domestic scale, it serves as an information center of world events and aims to discuss and disseminate information on current affairs of national and international importance and contribute to human welfare and development generating awareness.

The NCWA's key area of interest includes foreign policy of Nepal, Nepal's bilateral relations and engagements, and global affairs. The organization over the years has carried out several talk programs by visiting dignitaries and scholars to enhance awareness and understanding among the nations of the world. Seminars and workshops on international understanding, global events, and issues of national concern have also been frequently conducted. The NCWA also produces a number of publications like the journal of NCWA, NCWA e-bulletin, commentaries, and exchanges publication with other institutions. There is an exchange of goodwill visits with various foreign institutions with the intention of advancing international understanding. The NCWA's activities are financed through membership fees, government grants, sales proceeds of its publications, and support from other sources.

3.7.9 Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE)

Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement is an independent, apolitical, and non-partisan think tank which believes in freedom, democracy, and a world free from conflict. It envisions a world, where sources of insecurity are identified and understood, conflicts are prevented or resolved, and peace is advocated. NIICE aims to advance the cause of peace and harmony through analysis and debate on fresh policy ideas, cooperation with global institutes and Think Tanks, as well as direct engagement and collaboration with decision-makers in the government, business, and civil society. NIICE also works at reaching the inestimable benefits of multiple viewpoints for bilateral, regional, and global issues. It was founded in 2016 with strong focus on China, India, and Indo-Pacific Affairs. It has four research centers –China Studies, Neighborhood Studies, Non-Traditional Security Studies, and Defense and Security Studies. It also has eight major research topics, such as Global Governance, Sustainable Development and Smart Cities, Climate Change and Energy, Disaster Management, International Economy and Development, China's Belt and Road Initiative, Indo-Pacific Affairs, Refugee and Migration, and Border and Trans-boundary Water Politics.

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In a very short time, NIICE has been able to build strong engagement with several reputed Think Tanks and universities. It has partnered with some of the most reputed universities and Think Tanks, such as Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Jawaharlal Nehru University, American University, Fudan University, Center for Land Warfare Studies, University of Malaya, Chulalongkorn University, Observer Research Foundation, United Service Institution of India, Institute of National Security Studies, Sri Lanka, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Amity University, OP Jindal Global University, and several embassies based in Nepal. It has organized a number of lectures with distinguished personalities from South Asia, China, Japan, and the US. They have hosted some of the greatest public intellectuals, theorists of international relations, policymakers, security experts, and officials such as Noam Chomsky, JJ Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, Robert Keohane, Robert Jervis, John Gaddis, Kishore Mahbubani, Shen Dingli, and others. It regularly publishes a newsletter, magazines, research reports, commentaries, book reviews, and books. Some of their flagship events are the NIICE Global Conclave, International Conference on Understanding China, International Women Summit, and International Young Scholars Summit.

3.7.10 Nepal Institute for Policy Research (NIPoRe)

Nepal Institute for Policy Research (NIPoRe) is an independent and non-partisan think tank based in Kathmandu which aims to generate evidence-based debate among citizens and critical actors of development in both public and private sectors on contemporary policy issues. NIPoRE undertakes research in eight distinct research clusters, aid and development, business and human rights, infrastructure, governance and federalism, labor and social welfare, national security and foreign affairs, technology and development, and trade and investment. Its research focus concentrates on four thematic areas, including economic policy, human development, national security, and technology.

NIPoRE generates data-driven public debates, and develops and recommends implementable inclusive policy ideas to the Nepal government and other major stakeholders on the country's existing and potential future policies. The organization's mission is to enhance effective policy-making of public, private, and development sector stakeholders in Nepal, maintain cross-sector and cross-country collaborations for better policymaking, reflect the truth and accuracy on policy issues, make policymaking as effective as possible, and seek to avoid subjective influences to generate more holistic and global policy evidence. ENB-NIPoRE Research workshop

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series is its flagship event. It frequently releases data visualizations on contemporary issues. The institute regularly publishes research commentaries.

3.7.11 Nepal Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS)

Nepal Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) is an independent, apolitical, non-profit, and nonpartisan national organization that creates a common forum for individuals and organizations from the government, political parties, security sector institutions, civil society, and other stakeholders to hold discussion on issues of peace, security, democracy, and development (PSDD). NISS aims to support the government, parliamentarians, security institutions, and stakeholders through research studies, interactions, debates, and training and knowledge sharing to produce strategic level papers and policy recommendations in areas of PSDD. It also is keen on advocating the same at the national, regional, and international level. The institute coordinates intellectual leadership from different fields and experiences to create a socio-political understanding on policy and issues of PSDD.

NISS has partnered with Leshan Normal University, China Institute for International and Strategic Studies (CIISS), Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS), and China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR). NISS organizes various programs and interactions every year. Some of its flagship events include: Interaction Program on Border Management of Nepal 2019 and Interaction Program on OBOR and Nepal's Development Prospects 2018.

3.7.12 Niti Foundation

Niti Foundation is a Nepali non-profit organization engaged in strengthening Nepal's policy process through collaborative research, innovative policy adoption, and enhanced policy choice. The organization was founded in the year 2010. The objectives the organization seeks to attain are to identify, support, and convene present and future leaders in public policy reform, support networking and coalition building for public policy reform, and encourage Nepali organizations and individuals that work on public policy reform. Niti Foundation advances through a larger discourse on innovative methods to achieve 'more public' policy with just and fair outcomes, in a funding environment that is 'increasingly characterized by donors who wish to engage more effectively in supporting policy reform. At the moment it has been providing support for Nepal's policymakers, analysts, and public intellectuals to support and conduct research, advocacy, and action on salient policy issues. It also enables access to resources and platforms for policy discourse, and space for policy debate and contestation in the country. The organization intends to bring local

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actors at the forefront of the policymaking process from agenda setting to policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. This locally-rooted process ensures wider ownership among policy actors and implementers, thereby improving their effective implementation and accountability. Niti Foundation believes that when the policymaking process is led by external partners, including donor organizations, the need for public inter locution and intermediation of development partners with the context and Nepali public policy actors becomes apparent.

The institute's strategic advisory services seek to offer political savvy, policy intelligence, and practical advice to those supporting an accountable, representative, and implementable public policy process in Nepal. It also provides Nepali-led interlocution and intermediation to contextualize local policy settings with relevant data and evidence for informed policymaking, facilitating an environment of trust and long-term strategic relations among donors and local policy actors.

3.7.13 Policy Research Institute (PRI)

Policy Research Institute (PRI) is a think tank formed by the Government of Nepal in 2018 to help it review and reformulate public policies by carrying out policy research that is both context-conscious and evidence-based. The organization is administered by an autonomous board of directors and an executive chairperson, and is largely funded by the government. The PRI values the engagement of citizens and civil society groups in reviewing and reformulating policy in furthering a culture of evidence-based public dialogue. PRI policy research outputs will normally be accessible to interested readers, reporters, and reviewers. The PRI has several windows of dialogue and collaboration open for researchers and intellectuals. It seeks an effective and responsive public policy for national prosperity by offering an informed public policy.

The PRI has a wide mandate. Potential areas of PRI policy research include governance, economic growth, equity and inclusion, infrastructure, international relations, agriculture, education, tourism, and other sectors. The research issues and themes have further been organized into the following five thematic clusters: Development, Infrastructure and Economic Affairs; Governance, Public Services Delivery and Federal Affairs; Political, Social and Legal Affairs; National Interests, Foreign Policy and Strategic Affairs; and Science, Technology and Environment. PRI has signed a MoU with Tribhuvan University, Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), Nepal Law Campus, and Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC).

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3.7.14 Social Science Baha

Social Science Baha is an independent, non-profit organization established in January 2002 with the objective of promoting and enhancing research in the social sciences. The first activity undertaken by Social Science Baha was to set up a social science library, the only one of its kind in the country so far. Social Science Baha has diversified its activities to pursue other means of helping the growth of the social sciences, such as running a four-month Immersion Course on Contemporary Social Issues. By the time of its formal registration in January 2007, Social Science Baha's activities included lectures, discussions, workshops, and conferences as well as publishing books and other research papers. Soon afterwards, Social Science Baha began undertaking research, both as a collaborating partner with academic/research institutions and on contract.

Social Science Baha publishes books, reports, papers, and policy briefs on different aspects of the social sciences and related fields. Some of these publications are for sale, but most are available for free downloads. Social Science Baha has been carrying out research works since 2007. These research projects are of two types: Collaborative research with academic/research institutions, and contract research for groups based in Nepal or abroad. Many of these projects are of a topical nature and seek to link the academia with popular discourse. The organization's research interest includes labor migration and migration governance.

3.7.15 South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE)

South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) was established in 1999 as a regional non-profit NGO, and since then it has been growingly recognized as a think tank at the local, national, regional, and global levels. The organization is also identified in the capacity of a secretariat of a national network of Nepal-based national and international NGOs, namely, National Alliance for Food Security in Nepal (NAFOS); global network of civil society organizations (CSOs) working on biodiversity management and farmers' rights issues called Farmers' Rights Advocacy Network (FRANK); and global network of least developed countries (LDCs) established for their economic transformation called Least Developed Countries Network for Economic Transformation (LDC-NET). Its members and staff have served/been serving on the board of various international and national agencies working on trade, development, farmers' rights, and food security issues. The organization aims to ensure fair, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable growth and development in South Asia. In order to achieve this vision, SAWTEE seeks to enable stakeholders, particularly the poor and marginalized, to derive net benefits from the

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changing political economy and environmental landscapes. The institution equips stakeholders with knowledge, information, and skills to represent their interests and assert their rights to development. It aims to contribute to fair, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable growth and development through informed and participatory policy-making and implementation. It is keen on enhancing meaningful participation and strengthening regional cooperation of South Asian countries, particularly the least developed and landlocked, and their integration into the sub-regional, regional, and multilateral trade, economic, and environmental systems. The funds for sustaining SAWTEE are derived through membership fees and contributions, sales proceeds of its publications, and support from development partners. Some of the development partners that SAWTEE receives support from are Action Aid, The Asia Foundation, CARITAS, Development Fund, Department for International Development (DFID), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Ford Foundation, International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Oxfam Novib, The Hague, etc.

SWATEE also has a number of member institutions from different countries. From Bangladesh there are two organizations – Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) and Unnayan Shamannay, Dhaka. Likewise, from India there are three organizations– Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG), Consumer Unity& Trust Society (CUTS), and Development Research and Action Group (DRAG), New Delhi. It also has members from two organizations in Nepal – Society for Legal and Environmental Analysis and Development Research (LEADERS) and Forum for Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public). Pakistani member institutions include Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI); and there are the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and Law & Society Trust (LST) from Sri Lanka. The works of SWATEE are focused on policy research, advocacy, capacity building, sensitization, networking, and alliance building. These works of the organization cover themes such as economic and social reform, growth and poverty, trade integration and supply-side constraints, trade and climate change, agriculture policies, biodiversity management and food security, regulation and competitiveness, financial resource management, and remittance and development.

Although Nepal has been and is home to a number of Think Tanks, long-term academic collaboration and sharing of expertise between such Think Tanks remain rare and sporadic. IFA can expand its research reach and increase its influence by engaging with such domestic Think Tanks. It is recommended that IFA partner with emerging Think Tanks of Nepal and conduct joint research activities. Partnerships

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between IFA and selective Think Tanks with mutual field of interest could be done in publication, educational, and training projects.

It could establish deeper research engagement with government-funded Think Tanks, such as the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, Policy Research Institute, and the Nepal Council of World Affairs. Similarly, Nepal as a developing nation seeks more deliberation and extensive research on improving and accelerating its economy. On this front, engaging with prominent economic Think Tanks such as IIDS, CNAS, Niti Foundation, and SAWTEE for joint research and timely policy discussion holds great potential. Likewise, with the increasing number of international infrastructure development projects being carried out in Nepal, the collaborations can also focus on detailed assessment of the progress and implications these projects are having in Nepal. Such collaboration with the economic Think Tanks will help to effectively respond to requests from businesses to organize forums for closed policy discussion for better promotion of the country's economic interests. High-quality, comprehensive data, and analysis will help ease the demands on policymakers to address Nepal's economic problems.

IFA can also partner with CNAS, CSAS, NCWA, NISS, and NIICE for joint research projects or round table policy discussions on issues related to geopolitics, Nepal-India and Nepal-China relations, and also make policy recommendations to the respective ministries. A proper analysis and discussion of Nepali policies by such Nepali Think Tanks can cater to Nepal's effective diplomatic engagement and functioning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies, permanent missions, and consulates. While with SAWTEE, it can work collaboratively to explore measures to minimize Nepal's increasing trade deficit with its neighbors, particularly India and China. Similarly, it can also engage in research and debates on Nepal's policies. There could be research on topics such as geopolitics of small states, causes and solutions of Nepal's widening trade deficit,border management and border security, and climate change that hold great relevance in contemporary times. IFA and CSAS can engage on a number of issues in South Asia. Similarly, CSAS and IFA can work together through the Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT) on research projects, which will give greater visibility to IFA in the region. Similarly, NISS and IFA can have collaboration on issues related to peace, security, democracy and development as their major focus is security. Cooperation to a greater extent is required between the Think Tanks in Nepal and IFA in order to provide pertinent policy solutions and recommendations to the government.

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3.8 Pakistan

3.81 Institute of Regional Studies (IRS)

Based in Islamabad, the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) is a think tank that holds strong links with national, regional, and international organizations and puts it in a position to produce quality research and encourage productive dialogues. IRS aspires to increase public awareness and generate understanding of issues in neighboring countries, and their relationship with Pakistan. The research specialization of IRS includes conflict resolution, violent religious conflict, confidence building measures, peace and democracy, and human security. IRS also gives equal preference to both traditional and non-traditional security issues, such as poverty. The research undertaken by the institute is focused especially on South Asia's foreign and national affairs, including geo-strategic defense, economic, cultural, health, education, environment, science and technology, and social issues. This includes China, West Asia, and Central Asian Republics. The international advisory board of the institute currently is composed of eminent scholars in the field of peace research, which includes Dr. Bates Gill of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Dr. Rifaat Hussain of Pakistan, and Dr. Beate Maeder-Metcalf of the United Nations. Some of the partner organizations of IRS include the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), and Center for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), and National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). Besides conducting quality research, the organization holds many events – conferences, seminars, and workshops for discussing and promoting peace in Pakistan and the wider region. Some of its flagship events include the Intra Afghan Dialogue.

Although very few academic collaborations have been held between the Think Tanks of Pakistan and Nepal, there are many possibilities and scope for collaboration between the two. The possible areas of collaboration between the IRS and IFA includethematic areas, such as South Asia, peace, governance, democracy, and human security in the form of conferences, exchange programs, fellowships, and research.

3.8.2 Institute of Strategic Studies (ISS)

The Institute of Strategic Studies (ISS) is an autonomous, non-profit research and analysis organization that was founded in 1973 with the motto to provide strategic perspectives through research and dialogue. The institute is devoted to providing quality policy inputs through informed research, objective analyses, and dialogue on global and regional issues affecting peace, security, and development of Pakistan. The institute is dedicated to offering an in-depth understanding and objective analyses of

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regional and global strategic issues, affecting international peace and security. The institute also promotes a broad-based and informed public understanding of vital issues affecting Pakistan and the international community as a whole. The underlying principle of the institute is to initiate study, discussions, research, and analyses based on open and published sources of information. The institute creates a forum for scholars, specialists, writers, and speakers for study, research, and analyses of vital strategic and allied issues and the multi-disciplinary compulsions of strategy, peace, and security, and various elements of national power affecting Pakistan and the international community, in their historical as well as future perspective. The institute also publishes a quarterly journal called Strategic Studies. Since the ISS also selects and engages scholars, authors, experts, specialists, and writers to speak or write on strategic and allied issues, it holds periodical talks and seminars on strategic and security issues. It establishes and maintains collaboration with similar institutes in other parts of the world and represents Pakistan at international conferences on strategy. So far, the institute has signed around 30 MoUs with research organizations across the world in order to encourage mutual exchanges. Some of its partners include the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria/ Atlantic Digital Net, Belarusian State University, Minsk, Center for International Studies (CeSI), and China Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA), etc. The institute also assists other official and non-official organizations in carrying out research and analysis of strategic issues.

At present, the institute focuses on areas such as South Asia, China, Japan and the Asia Pacific, Afghanistan and Central Asia, Iran, Middle East, United States, United Nations, strategy and security, Pakistan's foreign policy, nuclear issues, terrorism and militancy, and economic and social issues. These interests are carried out through five centers: China and Pakistan Study Center, Arms Control and Disarmament Center, India Study Center, Center for Middle East and Africa, and Center for Strategic Perspective. The South Asia Program is its flagship event.

3.8.3 Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)

Established in 1999, the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) is one of the oldest non-partisan Think Tanks in Pakistan. The institute works on all aspects of national security, including international relations and lawfare, strategic studies, governance and public policy, and economic security of Pakistan. IPRI is allied with the National Security Division (NSD), Government of Pakistan. The organization has been engaged in two decades of rigorous and timely analysis of crucial strategic agendas and inter-governmental processes that influence national and regional policy communities. IPRI's publications offer contemporary, latest, and high-quality research in the form

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of authoritative journals, books, monographs, and policy briefs. The events organized by the institute range from seminars on current international and national affairs to large-scale international conferences that bring together renowned leaders, academics, and policymakers from all over the world. The institute has in recent times undergone a reorientation of research culture with the objective of aligning its research products with policy issues relevant to the government and policy community. The policy briefs are produced by the IPRI to offer actionable policy recommendations to policymakers at the national level. In order to foster support and intellectual interaction between the North-South and South-South in the realm of culture and ideas, IPRI also supports academic exchange programs with regional and international researchers and Think Tanks.

IPRI seeks to spearhead qualitative change in the research and policy industry through data, innovation, and technology. For this, it intends to inform policy and drive change through research and dialogue on topics of contemporary relevance across all aspects of national security. The research interests of IPRI include international relations, lawfare, governance and public policy, strategic studies, and economic security covering South Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the P5 States. IPRI partners with the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA), Kathmandu, Pakistan Study Center, Fudan University, Shanghai, Arab Thought Forum (ATF), Amman, Jordan, and China Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA), Beijing.

Both the South Asian nations, Nepal and Pakistan, share a common longing for socio-economic development, while also being faced with similar challenges in advancing such goals. Hence, with the challenges and aspirations that reflect one another, there remain many unexplored but crucial areas where cooperation and collaboration are possible. While there is an enormous possibility of further cooperation in the areas of tourism and education between the two countries, enhancing the scope for diversifying bilateral economic engagements through research and discussion on potential trade, investment, and industrial joint ventures can be brought to attention. Pakistan being an important regional player, there are several areas where Nepal and Pakistan can collaborate. IFA could collaborate with the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) and have research on bilateral relations, economic engagement, and regional issues. IFA and IRS can also have exchanges on their BRI projects and their impact on the economy. The study will be relevant as there are varying perspectives and takes regarding Chinese projects in South Asia.

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IFA along with Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) can jointly convene annual round table meetings and policy discussions with leading experts on diverse sectors (economic, political, strategic) and make policy recommendations to their respective governments to strengthen their bilateral ties. Collaborative research can be done between IFA and the Institute of Regional Studies on strengthening SAARC, in addition to organizing national level dialogues by including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from both the sides to mitigate and resolve the existing difference and take measures to organize the 19th SAARC summit as soon as possible.

Like IPRI, IFA can also host academic exchange programs with regional and international researchers and Think Tanks. This can be done to help researchers from the host and sending countries to gain exposure and foster support and intellectual interaction in the academic domain of culture and ideas.

3.9 Sri Lanka

3.9.1 Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS)

Formed on the basis of an Act of the Parliament, the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) is an autonomous economic research organization. The mission of IPS is to conduct high-quality, independent, policy-relevant research to provide robust evidence for policymaking and improve the lives of all Sri Lankans. The substantive focus of the institute's research program is to provide an integrated analysis of the development challenges facing Sri Lanka to meet the fundamental objectives of sustainable growth, equity, and poverty alleviation. The IPS was conceived in the mid-1980s as an independent institution intended to promote and encourage policy-oriented economic research and to strengthen the capacity for medium-term policy analysis in Sri Lanka. It was established in December 1988 and was formally set up as a legal entity by gazette notification in April 1990. The IPS functions under the key ministries involved in economic policy making and implementation in Sri Lanka, working closely with the government, private sector, development partners, civil society, and the academia.

The institute's research interests cover macroeconomic, trade and competitiveness, migration and urbanization, health, education and labor, agriculture and agri business development, poverty and social welfare, environment, natural resources, and climate change. Its publications are an important means through which the institute provides its research findings, obtains feedback and reactions, and informs policymakers on issues of socio-economic policy. The publications are made in the State of the Economy, Research Studies, Policy Insights, Talking Economics Digest, and South

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Asia Economic Journal. Since the establishment of the IPS, it has been supported through a collaborative project between the Royal Netherlands Government and the Government of Sri Lanka under four phases of operations that allowed the institute to gradually diversify its income and resource base.

In the interim period, the IPS has been successful in establishing its own endowment fund and setting in motion the transition to full financial independence. Regular in-house events are held at the institute, conducted primarily by IPS research staff members. These events are viewed as a key means of encouraging debate and discussion of on-going research at the IPS and to obtain feedback on the work carried out. The institute frequently undertakes events such as seminars, panel discussions, and training to publicize IPS research and to produce policy discussions and debates. Both foreign and local experts participate in these events, which are geared towards policymakers, the private sector, development partners, and academics.

3.9.2 Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKI)

Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI), named after the late Lakshman Kadirgamar, P.C., M.P, and three-time Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, is the realization of a purpose to fulfill the country's need for a think tank. The institute also reflects Minister Kadirgamar's vision for Sri Lanka, by promoting the country's intellectual profile in the field of foreign policy research and engagement. LKI strives to engage in independent research of Sri Lanka's international relations and strategic interests, and to provide insights and recommendations that advance justice, peace, prosperity, and sustainability. The think tank aspires to engage in unbiased and independent research on international relations and strategic interests of Sri Lanka. The institute undertakes a series of research projects with special focus on the area of global governance, global economy, international affairs, regionalism, defense, and security, development, China, India, US, Sri Lanka, and prospector youth. The regions covered by the mentioned research interests include Asia, Australia/Oceania, Africa, Europe, and America. LKI frequently produces a series of publications in the form of working papers, policy briefs, explainers, spotlights, takeaways, books, annual reports, and external publications.

Over the years, the organization has organized a number of events – webinars, workshops, conferences, and round table discussions. LKI has a number of distinguished lectures and events, and it has hosted renowned speakers like UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, UK's former PM Tony Blair, US Secretary of State John Kerry, and

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Margot Wallstrom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, among others. LKI also has a number of collaborators and partners that have been contributing in achieving the organization's goal. This includes J. Walter Thompson, Sri Lanka, MJF Group (Dilmah Tea), CHEC Port City Colombo (Pvt) Ltd, The Asia Foundation, India-Sri Lanka Foundation, and Overseas Development Institute.

3.9.3 Regional Center for Strategic Studies (RCSS)

The Regional Center for Strategic Studies (RCSS) is a South Asian independent, non-profit, and non-governmental think tank. Based in Colombo, the institute was founded in 1992, which has been encouraging research, dialogue, networking, and deliberation on a broad range of conventional and non-conventional sources of conflict and conditions of peace since its initial days. The RCSS enables scholars and other professionals to address, individually and collectively, problems and issues of topical interest for all South Asian countries and strives to be a leading regional institute that initiates, coordinates, and supports research and learning on South Asian strategic and security issues. Through its research and publications, the RCSS contributes towards knowledge-generation and knowledge-sharing, inside and outside the region. The output of the institute's projects, seminars, workshops, and conferences are frequently collated and disseminated in the form of proceedings, monographs, and edited volumes. Furthermore, the center encourages research and discourse in traditional and non-traditional areas of security through two flagship research awards: the Shelton Kodikara Research Award and the Mahbub ul Haq Research Award. Such awards provide researchers and scholars with the individual freedom to pursue academic research without interference, while in keeping with scholarly standards, and largely contribute to the policy papers of the RCSS. Newsletters of the RCSS provide updates on the initiatives and events of the RCSS and its partners. In addition, the organization publishes various journals, occasional papers, books and articles.

The research interest of the think tank covers intra-regional security and regionalism in South Asia, climate change and human security in South Asia, youth and violence, extremism in South Asia, civic engagement and governance in South Asia, South Asia and evolving security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region, and South Asia in global politics. They have a number of flagship events like the British South Asian Summit and Think Tank Summit.

There are several areas of mutual interest where Nepal and Sri Lanka can work together. Both the countries have huge Buddhist populations. Sri Lanka has long been trying to cement ties with countries associated with Buddhism by stressing on

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the ancient Buddhist link in the region. IFA in coordination with MoCTCA should take this interest as an opportunity and partner with the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka and convene joint papers and conferences on Buddhism. One such potential topic to explore can be 'Influence of Kāli cult in Buddhism; the mingled rituals and belief'.

Likewise, IFA in coordination with MoCTCA can carry out campaigns for deeper engagement through tourism. Boosting connectivity between the two countries can help foster tourism. Direct flights and railway links can have substantial impact in attracting people to each other's countries. A joint seminar on such potential could start preliminary discussion for future research on this matter. Likewise, there is immense economic potential between Nepal and Sri Lanka. IFA could engage with the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies for joint research on connectivity issues and make policy recommendations to their respective governments for enhancing deeper ties and mutual economic gains.

It is recommended that IFA, like LKI, which recently hosted a conference "50 Years of Vietnam-Sri Lanka Relations: Achievements and Prospects" in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Embassy in Vietnam, can convene similar conferences with Nepal's missions abroad. The RCSS has been holding in-house discussions on pertinent issues in Sri Lanka. IFA, too, can put together a monthly in-house round table discussion on issues like the MCC, BRI, etc. The RCSS is also a founding member of the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia), with a network of 31 research institutes and Think Tanks across Asia. IFA can also propose for the membership in the consortium to network and collaborate for joint papers, conferences, and symposiums with its member Think Tanks on NTS.

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CHAPTER IV

Challenges to Think Tanks

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4.1 Challenges to Think Tanks of the Region

Think Tanks of South Asia often confront several challenges. Their sustainability is a real challenge due to lack of continuous funding. Most of the Think Tanks in the region that have sustained so far receive regular support either from the government or from international organizations, donors, and foundations. Many Think Tanks, however, were unable to sustain because they could not diversify their research or adapt themselves with the changing needs. For instance, in the case of Nepal, there were many Think Tanks working on the issue of peace and conflict during the time of the Maoist insurgency, and on issues related to constitutionalism when Nepal was drafting the constitution. However, many well-funded Think Tanks that were working on such areas were unable to sustain after the Comprehensive Peace Accord and promulgation of the constitution as they could not diversify their research interest. Moreover, many Think Tanks in the region lack skilled manpower to carry out research. The countries of South Asia do not invest much on research, barringa few exceptions.

On the contrary, funders/ donors often complain that Think Tanks are unable to meet their objectives, which discourages them from investing much on research activities. The funders and donors often have their own interests, which they can achieve only by implementing the findings of the research. However, since Think Tanks do not have much of a role in implementing the research findings, implementation failure discourages the research funders. Hence, many a time, they raise questions about the outcome and its utility. Similarly, the most challenging task for Think Tanks of the region is to make their research relevant by justifying its utility. Often, like many social science researches, the findings of think tank research are even questioned, or find them in controversy.

According to Ordoñez, Director of Southern Voice, a network of Think Tanks devoted to bringing research from the Global South to international debates on the development agenda, there are five major challenges that Think Tanks often face while dealing with international policy research. First, most of the Think Tanks focus on the country, rather than the issue, and as a result, they fail to reach their objectives in the long run. Second, the Think Tanks should discuss the topic and not advocate it. A think tank would benefit by being critical and discussing issues in a holistic manner and with the policy constraints in mind, instead of advocating one specific issue. However, in order to meet the demand, desire, and objective of the funding organizations, Think Tanks often involve themselves in advocacy. Third, Think Tanks have often failed to get to the right places and discuss issues with the right people. Many a time, they do research on issues detached from the problem zone, holding them aloof from the real

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facts. Fourth, lack of coordination among Think Tanks is another part. Coordination is a costly affair and requires time, resources, leadership, commitment, and trust. Fifth, while influencing policy at the national or international level, Think Tanks are likely to be interacting at the same time with different actors that will be deciding on the policy, the ones implementing it, and even the ones evaluating it. Most of the time, Think Tanks must inform, debate, and discuss the outcome prior to the decision-making process. Hence, many a time, Think Tanks have to confront a different policy scenario, which adds to the complexities of the process (Ordoñez, 2013). South Asia and China are no exceptions; hence, they often face these challenges.

Apart from these, most of the Think Tanks of South Asia face challenges in the management of human resources. During discussion with different scholars, they mentioned that most of the Think Tanks of South Asia were politicized. Hence, the government gives emphasis to those that are close to the government and can advocate their plans and policies efficiently. Similarly, many governments also use Think Tanks as 'old age shelter houses' for their retired diplomats and security personnel, which hardly generates new or alternative ideas. Hence, rather than creating new ideas and alternative voices, many a time they simply echo the voices of the government or continue with the prevalent ideas. The recruitment process in government Think Tanks is not competitive, although the case is different in private or other Think Tanks that are funded by foundations, organizations, or donors. They are slightly more competitive, and their outcomes are also better in terms of quality. The number of training programs, exchanges and interactions, and field trips are very important for quality research. The private Think Tanks spend more on those aspects, while it is not so rigorous in government-funded ones.

4.2 Challenges to Government-funded Think Tanks like IFA

Government Think Tanks, like IFA, often face many challenges. The government often questions the utility and challenges the outcomes. The government looks for a greater role of Think Tanks in advocacy, defending its plans and policies, and even the slightest deviation, at times, can lead to undesired outcomes, impacting funding. In particular, Think Tanks facing such challenges need to strike a fine balance, win confidence and clarify the relevance of their research. Think Tanks should be able to carry out their research autonomously as only unbiased research findings will be able to offer holistic alternatives for the governments in meeting the desired objectives. The importance and the need of progressive spaces for think tank research must be stressed. Think Tanks as a separate entity can more effectively assess the problems in

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policy and provide possible replacements, which will be in the interest of the country as well as the government in the long run. Moreover, it requires trust between the Think Tanks and policymakers. Likewise, it is the duty of a Think Tanks to update the policymakers and funders with the changing circumstances so that more updated, relevant, and convincing decisions can be made.

For instance, IFA can regularly keep the Nepal government posted on the important political changes taking place in the region and around the world that have an impact on Nepal and its policies. This will not only add relevance and utility, but also assure funding and make research based on those developments convincing.

The Think Tanks should be left free by the government to allow them to generate new ideas. The nation and the government will benefit immensely from ideas that are unbiased. Though, at times, in the short-term, the government might feel uncomfortable, such ideas will be in its interest and in the interest of the nation, as it will protect the government and the nation from adopting outdated policies that can have an adverse impact. This is an important aspect of democracy and democratization of the country. The Think Tanks should also try to resist any interference by the government as this would largely contribute to the quality and relevance of the findings. Otherwise, with the change in government, the utility will vary, and such Think Tanks will not be able to make a huge impact at the domestic, regional, or international level. The government should refrain from intervening in the workings of the Think Tanks and rather make provisions for independent study. Intervention in the recruitment and research findings will limit the capacities of the Think Tanks.

On the other hand, Think Tanks should generate unbiased research that can serve national interest, rather than the funder's interest. Like private Think Tanks, government Think Tanks should also encourage researchers, help in their capacity building, and play an active role in sharing the findings with the government. The government should use the findings to solve problems. The capability of the government Think Tanks to prove their utility and enhance their relevance in the day-to-day functioning of the government will attract greater support and funding from the government.

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While IFA as a government think tank is confronted with these challenges, it also enjoys several benefits. It does not have to worry much about its funding and existence. Government-funded Think Tanks are also trusted globally compared to other Think Tanks. As a government think tank, it is convenient for IFA to approach, interact, communicate, and engage with domestic and international Think Tanks.

4.2.1 Identified Areas for Collaboration

IFA has been working on several issues related to foreign policy, security, economy, and bilateral relations. However, with the changing times and demand, there is a need to explore new areas of research. Some of the identified areas for research that IFA can collaborate with other Think Tanks are:

- Climate change and environmental issues
- Cyber crime and terrorism
- Diplomacy, foreign policy, international relations, and peace building
- Defense and strategic studies
- Economic diplomacy and development studies
- Public policy issues
- Host of socio-economic areas: education, health, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, and gender equality.

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CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations

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Conclusions and Recommendations

The raison d'être for most Think Tanks is to serve as important catalysts for ideas and action. Think Tanks can be seen as a body of experts, mainly as policy actors, for an open and accountable process of policy research, analysis, and evaluation. It may be further defined as a place, venue, or corporation where different views and ideas are generated and stored for public use. Professionals from different disciplines converge in a think tank to share their professional knowledge and skills gained from years of public service. Such expertise and experience are exploitable for a country in numerous ways. It is, therefore, apparent that Think Tanks be used for the benefit of the general public.

To avoid policy failures and ensure that the policy intentions are achieved, effective public policy design and implementation are required. Think Tanks, thus, have been proving their utility in the domestic sphere. They play a distinctive role by providing more independent intellectual support to the government and create new alternatives for public policy. In such a scenario, they serve to bridge the gap between the government and the public in serving the public interest.

While Think Tanks are normally characterized as being retirement homes for many former public servants and policymakers, many young professionals with a good educational background and experience see them as a place to pursue a career. This makes space for the integration of both old and new knowledge. Every country, therefore, must try to exploit such knowledge and experience.

The West fully recognizes the role and utility of Think Tanks. However, in South Asia, we still do not have sufficient mechanisms to do so. Big countries like India and China might have better capacities to use Think Tanks in several ways. But in other countries, the small number of Think Tanks shows that such a concept has not taken deep root in society. In such a scenario, losers will be the society which cannot utilize the proven skills, knowledge, and expertise of the high professionals in different fields. Big Think Tanks with government funding have more researchers and workers as well as professionals who can devote their work in manifold areas. As privately funded Think Tanks have little access and power to indulge in big issues,they confine their activities to socio-economic issues.

During the study, it was observed that most big and old Think Tanks are government funded as both policymakers and the government benefit from them the most.

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However, there are a large number of other Think Tanks that get funding from various institutions, foundations, business houses, donors, and countries. Such Think Tanks face a big challenge in sustaining themselves and may have to close down over time. Correspondingly, foreign-funded Think Tanks are often compelled to align their objectives with those of the donors. Hence, it is suggested that the government, domestic corporate houses, and foundations encourage and support Think Tanks through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The study has identified some of the prominent Think Tanks of the region (China and South Asia) that work on foreign policy, security affairs, economic issues, and development. It has also explored their research interests, their activities, major events, and possible areas of collaboration with IFA. The study also discusses their evolution, their sources of funding, and their engagement with different organizations at home and abroad. The study recommends the following to IFA to enhance its international engagement, improve the quality of its research, create greater visibility, and enhance its relevance:

- **Research collaboration:** IFA should sign MoUs with the mainstream Think Tanks of China and South Asia for research collaboration on issues of mutual interest, such as foreign policy, security, climate change, economy, bilateral relations, and others. They should have joint research programs, scholar exchanges, joint events, publications, and other academic engagements. IFA needs to enhance interactions and exchanges to make itself more visible and to provide greater exposure to its scholars.
- **Short-term and long-term research program:** IFA should take the initiative to hold weekly or monthly debriefings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on contemporary issues that can have an impact on Nepal. The officials at MOFA can be updated with major international developments that have an impact on Nepal's foreign policy. Besides, they can also suggest to the ministry recommendations to prepare themselves to deal with such challenges. IFA should have short-term and long-term projects which can be used by the government and ministries. Short-term projects can be of one year, which can be on contemporary issues such as migration and bilateral issues. Long-term projects can be in the nature of some vision documents or grand strategy paper focusing on Nepal's national interests. For instance, how we should uplift Nepal's image at the international level in the next five, 10 or 25 years. The long-term projects can be on climate change, economic diplomacy, and other areas.

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- **Produce Vision 2040 or 2050 document:** IFA can work on the strategy and design of the 'Vision 2040' or 'Vision 2050' documents. Such documents can be a catalyst in driving an informed and effective Nepal foreign policy in the coming 20-30 years.
- **Restructure and recruit human resources:** IFA should restructure itself into different centers and recruit competent full-time scholars to carry out research on issues that are significant for Nepal's foreign policy and national interest. While there should be a proper recruitment procedure, the scholars should also be provided regular trainings. This will enhance the quality of research and productivity of IFA.
- **Training and management of honorary consulates:** Nepal's honorary consulates are often accused of lacking the required competency and knowledge with regard to Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy. Hence, it is suggested that IFA train and manage the honorary consulates to qualify them as per the changing needs. Honorary consulates can additionally use their expertise to support IFA on research related to economic diplomacy.
- **New areas of research and cooperation:** Nepal is becoming vulnerable to climate change as the snow-capped mountains are rapidly melting, which can have serious consequences for the entire region. Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought realization among countries that there is a greater need of regional cooperation to fight pandemics, natural disasters, and climate change. Hence, IFA should explore newer areas of research, such as climate change, regional cooperation, climate security, and science diplomacy.
- **Flagship Annual Dialogue:** There is scope for IFA to enhance its cooperation and make it more visible around the world. It can do so through its flagship annual events where high dignitaries and heads or members of Think Tanks can be invited to share their ideas on the issues that have regional and global implications. IFA should host a flagship annual program, such as an IFA Think Tank Forum, IFA Annual Dialogue, South Asia Regional Dialogue, Nepal Foreign Policy Summit, Paraastra Niti Sambad, or Nepal Sambad. This will give greater visibility to Nepal, in general, and IFA, in particular.

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Abbreviations

AIDIA	Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs
AISS	Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies
API	African Policy Institute
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ATF	Arab Thought Forum
BCCS	Bangladesh Center for China Studies
BCTR	Bangladesh Centerfor Terrorism Research
BELA	Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association
BIISS	Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies
BILIA	Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BIPSS	Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BSIR	BIISS Scholarship on International Relations
CACDA	China Arms Control and Disarmament Association
CAG	Civic Action Group
CAIFC	China Association for International Friendly Contact
CBS	Centerfor Bhutan and GNH Studies
CCCPC	Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
CCIS	China Center for International Studies
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CEDA	Center for Economic Development and Administration
CeIS	Center for International Studies
CICIR	China Institute for Contemporary International Relations
CIIS	China Institute of International Studies
CLAWS	Center for Land Warfare Studies
CNAS	Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies

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COSATT	Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks
CIPS	Centre for International Peace and Stability
CRP	China Research Program
CSAS	Centre for South Asian Studies
CSC	China Study Center
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CUTS	Consumer Unity & Trust Society
DFID	Department for International Development
DRAG	Development Research and Action Group
EIAS	European Institute for Asian Studies
EU	European Union
FALG	Foreign Affairs Leading Group
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FNCCI	Federation of Nepal Chambers of Commerce and Industries
FOSIM	Foreign Service Institute of Maldives
FRANK	Farmers' Rights Advocacy Network
GFC	Green Finance Committee
GIIS	Global Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GNH	Gross National Happiness
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
ICRIER	Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations
ICWA	Indian Council of World affairs
IDIS	Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies
IFA	Institute of Foreign Affairs
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IIDS	Institute for Integrated Development Studies
IIR	Institute of International Relations

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IISE	Institute for International Social-Economic Studies
IISS	Institute of International and Strategic Studies
ILO	International Labor Organization
INSS	Institute for National Security
IPCS	Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies
IPRI	Islamabad Policy Research Institute
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka
IReS	Center for Internal and Regional Security
IRS	Institute of Regional Studies
ISAS	Institute of South Asian Studies
ISEAS	Institute of South East Asian Studies
ISET-N	Institute for Social and Environmental Transition - Nepal
ISS	Institute of Strategic Studies
JDHR	Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights
JIIA	Japan Institute of International Affairs
LDC-NET	Least Developed Countries Network for Economic Transformation
LEADERS	Society for Legal and Environmental Analysis and Development Research
LKI	Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute
LST	Law & Society Trust
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP-IDSA	Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses
NAFOS	National Alliance for Food Security in Nepal
NASC	Nepal Administrative Staff College
NCWA	Nepal Council of World Affairs
NESA Center	Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies
NIICE	Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement
NIPoRe	Nepal Institute for Policy Research
NISS	Nepal Institute for Strategic Studies
NSD	National Security Division

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NSP	Nuclear Security Program
NUML	National University of Modern Languages
ORF	Observer Research Foundation
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PIPS	Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services
PKU	Peking University
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRI	Policy Research Institute
PSDD	Peace, Security, Democracy and Development
RCSS	Regional Centre for Strategic Studies
RDCY	Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China
RIL	Reliance Industries
RNSSC	Regional Network of Strategic Study Centers
SAARC	South Asian Association for International Cooperation
SARRF	South Asian Regional Research Forum
SAWTEE	South Asia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SEARP	Southeast Asia Research Program
SIIS	Shanghai Institute for International Studies
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
TAF	The Asia Foundation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VIF	Vivekananda International Foundation
WTO	World Trade Organization

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The Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), a government think-tank, was established in 1993, and reconstituted as a semi autonomous body in 2012. It conducts research on matters of national interest particularly Nepal's external relations and diplomatic dealings with foreign countries and provides policy inputs and recommendations to the Government of Nepal on foreign policy, international relations and strategic affairs. The IFA also caters to the professional training needs of Nepali officials serving in Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a policy research think tank, the IFA delves into research studies on matters of national interest, particularly Nepal's relations and conduct with foreign countries. The IFA collaborates with partner organizations, at home and abroad, to realize its objectives relating to foreign policy issues and interaction with political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. Besides organizing seminars, workshops, meetings, dialogues and conferences, and bringing out relevant publications, it is also engaged in activities as a repository of information on Nepal's foreign policy issues.

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