

# Editorial Framing of the Post-quake Nepal and its Response to the Gorkha Earthquake

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## Abstract

This paper examines eleven editorials of *The Himalayan Times*, *The Kathmandu Post*, and *The Rising Nepal* (henceforth *THT*, *TKP* and *TRN*) published after the Great Gorkha Earthquake of April 2015. The representations of this disaster in these mainstream papers form the main concern of this study. It identifies the post-quake Nepali government's emergency response to the catastrophe as the dominant theme and then examines how this theme has been framed in the sampled editorials. Although the 2015 disaster has been studied in various writings, these are mostly restricted to reviews, field reports, write-ups and surveys. Research works exist even little. This lack of scholarly works reveals a gap in the studies conducted so far. Using framing analysis, this paper broadens the editorial representation of the April catastrophe. It engages a two-fold analytical process: identifying the dominant theme first and then analyzing how the theme has been framed. The paper also compares the editorials to understand whether they converge or diverge in terms of their framing, focusing on the major question: what dominant theme(s) have the editorials covered and how the frames used in the editorials project the overall national image of Nepal. The conclusion reveals that the frames used in the editorials have ultimately controlled readers' perception of the post-quake Nepali government and the way it has responded to the emergency situation.

## 1. Introduction and Rationale

On April 25, 2015, a devastating earthquake measuring 7.9 on the Richter Scale with its epicenter in Barpark of Gorkha District suddenly thrust Nepal to the center-stage of national and international attention. It caused "over 9,000" human casualties, injuring "over 22,000" people and affecting "more than 10 million" across the country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1). The earthquake on April 25 and its aftershocks -- a major one measuring 6.8 of May 12-- wreaked an unprecedented havoc in the country, destroying "homes, schools, health posts, hospitals, government buildings, archaeological and cultural heritages and basic services infrastructure" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1).

The paper argues that the image of a nation is largely controlled and determined by how newspaper editorials frame that nation during a crisis situation. By constantly harnessing a certain frame about a phenomenon, the media induce readers to accept or ignore the proffered interpretation about it. As in the case of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, the editorials of *TKP*, *THT*, and *TRN* competed to influence readers with their own interpretation of the disaster. The analysis of the editorials reveals that each employs frames that engage in the twin-task of elevating and obscuring the issues pertaining to the

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disaster. Through framing analysis, this paper argues that the frames used in the editorials affect readers' overall perception of how the government addressed the emergency situation, inducing them to accept the interpretation they advanced to frame it.

A disaster not only leaves a trail of debris behind it but also generates numerous debates and discourses. Along with its immediate disruptions like death, mourning, agonies, frustrations and suffering, it creates what Edward Simpson believes “chaotic war of ideas” (1). Although Simpson says this in relation to the 2001 Gujrat earthquake, a striking similarity can be perceived with that of the 2015 Nepal earthquake too. Officially framed as “devastating” (National Reconstruction Authority 1), the April 25 earthquake is understood not only in its magnitude and repercussions but also in various “chaotic war” of aftermath discourses, like international interventions, government preparedness, institutional capacity, irregularities, reconstructions, aids distribution, relocation and the like. Along with the sudden disruption of the normal cohesion of everyday human affairs, the April earthquake has also brought to surface a whole lot of contending issues surrounding it.

This paper takes an issue with how the selected editorials have responded to the discourses generated by the Gorkha earthquake, and deepens a scholarly engagement with it. In the ensuing few days after the 2015 earthquake, the Nepali editorials dealt with an exigency of how the government responded to the earthquake, and what frames they revealed in portraying its aftermath responsibility. The April 2015 earthquake is contextualized against this discourse, and is intended to examine the frames generated in the editorials of the mainstream newspapers in response to the disaster.

This paper broadens the study of the editorial representation of the 2015 Nepal disaster using framing analysis. Although it eschews public's evaluation of the frames, the finding of this research can, however, be of much help to those future researchers who wish to conduct a media-based or audience-based research from framing perspective.

## 2. Theoretical Orientation

As already pointed out, this paper uses framing analysis to examine how the selected editorials have framed the Nepali government and its response to the emergency situation after April 25. Framing theory is useful in explaining people's reactions during and after a catastrophic event as well as in enhancing their understanding of disasters. The precursor of framing theory is the Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman. He maintains that people perceive events in terms of primary frameworks that would later become known as schema. He describes a primary framework as “neatly presentable as a system of entities, postulates, and rules” (21) that allow people to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” (21) an infinite number of concrete occurrences. Thus, Goffman believes that people actively participate in classifying, organizing, and interpreting life experiences to give meaning to them. At its basic level, framing involves “taking some aspects of our reality and making them more accessible than other aspects” (Kuypers 181). Framing, in this sense, involves amplifying some items at the expense of others and is “a process whereby communicators act—consciously or not—to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed in a particular manner...” (Kuypers 182). In other words, it entails a process whereby aspects of reality are portrayed and interpreted in a particular way.

Robert M. Entman, building on Goffman's idea, defines framing as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (164). Entman writes, “if the media really are stunningly

successful in telling people what to think about, they must also exert significant influence over what they think” (165). To Entman, framing essentially operates through two processes: selection and salience. He states that salience makes a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences (392). As “a central organizing idea” (Gamson 3), framing allows communicators to highlight some bits of information about an item (selection) and magnifies them in prominence (salience). The effect of selection and salience results in the constructing and reconstructing of meaning “in a selective manner that legitimizes some accounts while obscuring others, privileging some political agendas and negating others” (Button 146). For researchers working within journalism, the most commonly used explanation of framing stems from Entman. He states:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and / or treatment recommendation for the item described (391).

The two framing processes as mentioned in this definition entail gathering a few elements of “a perceived reality” and then structuring them into a narrative that promotes the desired interpretation on behalf of the target audience. The process of meaning construction, Entman believes, involves “selecting and highlighting some facets or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and or solution” (417).

Media texts function in two ways: agenda-setting and agenda-extension. The former “focuses the public’s attention on a particular event or issue over another” and the latter “involves the influencing of the public” (Kuypers 183). It is at the second level of agenda-setting -- “persuasive aspects of news coverage” (183) -- that the values and perspectives of audience are “primed” (183). The rhetorical function of agenda-setting is limited to suggesting what to think. On the contrary, that of agenda-extension is to tell us “*how* to think about an issue” (185). Kuypers writes, “it is the process whereby news stories and editorials act to shape our awareness, understanding, and evaluations of issues and events in a particular direction” (299). Although journalism ethics suggests that the media must separate “fact” from “opinion” and provide “relevant backgrounds” to “perspectives (Day 35), newspaper editors “often frame issues by *how they decide to tell a story*” (Kuypers 183).

Framing analysis is a particularly useful method to understand the way the media frame social world and what impact they produce on readers’ perception of that world. Todd Gitlin asserts that the “[m]edia frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some degree, for us who rely on their reports” (7). Concurring with this observation, Button notes that media frames help journalists “organize the world; they also strongly shape how we, as readers, perceive the world” (146). As “the packages in which the central focus of a news story are developed and understood” (146), argues Button, it is necessary to examine and understand how the media frame the material world. Thus, the impact of framing in newspaper editorials is far reaching: from “structuring our social reality” (Trent and Friendenberg 135) to “strongly influencing political decision-making” and setting “government agenda” (Kuypers 182).

This paper applies framing analysis to study media texts. Using this method, I attempt to unpack how the post-quake Nepali government is framed in the editorials and whether the frames contribute to positive or negative image of Nepal in the context of the April 25 catastrophe.

### 3. Post-quake Nepali Government and its response to the April 25 disaster

*TKP* sets its agenda by representing the post-quake responsibility of the Nepali government as a dominant theme. The common frame that dominates its editorial coverage is the overall ineptitude of the government in dealing with the disaster. The editorial first mounts its criticism at the government for ignoring what “various seismologists have said over the years that we were due for a big one” (“Swift Response Need of the Hour”). According to this editorial, the government failed in implementing the “strictest building-code rules” in accordance with the “specifications that the seismologists have recommended.” Consequently the result was “devastating.” This oversight on what the earthquake experts have long foretold draws much of the editorial bashing. The paper here highlights government’s laxity in implementing the building rules as specified by the seismologist. If the government enacted the building codes stringently and disseminated the experts’ suggestion to the public timely, the paper argues, “the damage inflicted by such disasters” could have been “minimized” (“Swift Response Need of the Hour”).

At another level, the Nepali government has been framed as failing to provide “crucial information” to the public regarding “relief programmes, safe open spaces and food and water distribution” (“Digital Dividend”). Government’s ineptitude is once again referenced in its failure to use the social media effectively for the dissemination of disaster-related information. The editorial dubs this complacency of the government as “a sign of the old-school officialdom that still has not woken up to the potential of digital communication.” It brings in one comparable situation to point at the government’s inefficiency regarding the use of social media. The editorial illustrates the case of the 2010 Haiti earthquake to show how effectively experts there used “raw cell phone data” to reveal “movements,” hinting at the fact that “Nepal could ask for similar help.” In the second place, it mocks at the fact that the “ThankyouPM” as a quake-related information site is not run by the Nepali PM Sushil Koirala, but by India’s Narendra Modi, “who is much savvier at social media than our ageing digital dinosaurs” (“Digital Dividend”).

The recurring frame of the government’s incompetence continues to dominate in the ensuing editorials of *TKP*. *TKP* generalizes all the previous Nepali governments as characteristically inefficient in dealing with the emergency situation. In an all-out derision and a cynical tone, it states that “[H]andling disasters, natural or otherwise, has never been the strength of any Nepali government” (State Absence”). In this editorial, *TKP* cites the absence of state mechanism as a serious hampering factor in transporting the “relief materials to the far-flung villages” (“State Absence”). The editorial also critiques the government for its institutional inability to mobilize the human resources available at the national disaster response agencies like Disaster Management Division, Disaster Research and Study Section, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovering Section and National Emergency and Operation Centre. *TKP* also notes that the information dissemination mechanism lacks coordination, and comments that this has exacerbated the emergency situation even more. This editorial raises a crucial issue of how political parties are “reportedly pressuring the government to channel aid to their districts regardless of the impact the earthquake,” exemplifying the tendency of utilizing a crisis situation like this disaster for a political mileage. The paper emphasizes the need “for the government to take charge of coordination” by reviving the “issue-based institutions” to “verify disaster-related information” (State Absence”).

*TKP*'s critical stance towards the government's response to emergency situation takes an even sterner turn. The government's tepid response to the appeal of "international relief group" for humanitarian assistance and its failure "to coordinate relief efforts" ("People as Partner") invite stringent comments from the paper. The paper notes seriously about the way relief volunteers "were rebuffed by the government officials" ("People as Partner"), questioning the government's capability as a facilitator of relief distribution. Much of the focus of this editorial was a concern that "the government could take an insular stand that seek to project its authority at the expense of the relief effort" ("People as Partner"). The paper argues that lengthy and protracted facilitation procedure will only exacerbate the situations of "thousands of needy Nepalis." This editorial addresses the challenges of coordinating relief materials, showing its concern about the way the government seeks "to control the international relief effort," and "restrict entry and movement for organizations" ("People as Partner").

By placing a heavy emphasis on the post-quake Nepali government's responsibility to the disaster, *TKP* sets the topic in motion and drives the framing process. The four editorials of *TKP* adopt a rhetoric that questions the disaster response capability of the post-quake Nepali government. The common frames included failure in building code enforcement, ineffective disaster communication system, lack of political integrity, prevalence of partisanship and the government's complex red-tapism. *TKP* employs the phrases "not prepared", "missing" "its ineffectiveness", and "the slow response" to frame the government's incompetence. *TKP* remained critical of the Nepali government throughout the first initial week following the tremor.

Echoing *TKP*'s critical approach and its agenda, *THT* also sets the same agenda in motion and frames it in an almost similar manner right from the up-front. Although *THT* initially demonstrates a sympathetic stance at the government for its "best efforts" ("Task at Hand"), each successive editorial expresses a deep-seated resentment towards it. A recurring motif that dominates the editorials of this publication is the questioning of the overall coping capacity of the government. The editorial terms the government's reaction that it cannot anticipate "such a natural disaster" as "irresponsible" ("Task at Hand"). It calls the government "irresponsible" because although "the government was well aware of the fact that the major humanitarian crisis would arise in case of a major earthquake" ("Task at Hand"), it did not act on time.

This critical stance supports the editorial's argument that the government shirked from the responsibility of providing the public with information about the impending disaster despite the fact that "the disaster experts had earlier warned that the Kathmandu Valley would suffer the most if the major earthquake like the one in 1934 occurs in the near future" ("Task at Hand"). The editorial implies that the damage could have been minimized if the government, based on the experts' anticipation of the disaster, responded to them promptly and communicated their information timely to the people at large. The editorial holds the government liable for the deadly consequences because it ignored the experts' warning. It interprets the communication gap about the disaster between the people and experts as illustrating the sheer negligence and irresponsibility of the government. The admonitory tone of this editorial echoes the critical stance that permeates almost all the editorials of *TKP*.

The theme and frame of the first editorial of *THT* continues to feature in its subsequent texts. The government's poor performance and delayed response in emergency and relief assistance recur as a subject of concern. *THT* calls the government's humanitarian activities in providing "relief assistance" to the impacted communities as "very slow" ("Slow Relief"). It characterizes the

government as utterly unprepared in addressing “such a national crisis”. The “utter unpreparedness” as exemplified in the “poor handling of the emergency situation” (“Slow Relief”) promotes the paper’s criticism of the ineptitude and incompetency of the government. Again, the government is on the receiving end of the negative criticism in relation to providing timely and rapid assistance to the victims.

*THT* also pronounces criticism on the way political parties and government including the Prime Minister responded to rescue work and relief operation. It questions the credibility of “those in authority” and comments on the ability of the government “to handle the gigantic problems thrown up by the calamity in a most effective and efficient manner” (“Come out with Plan”). The paper revives its concern on “how the government is leading or going to conduct the relief and rescue operations and other works related to recovery” (Come out with Plan”). *THT* marks the overall disaster coping capacity of the Nepali government as “despairing” and considers its inability to mobilize relief operation “a poor reflection on the part of the government and the political parties” (Come out with Plan.). Both *TKP* and *THT* rally to expose government’s ineptitude in terms of its overall response to the disaster.

Thus, the government’s aftermath responsibility frame is made the main focus of the “agenda-setting” of *THT*. Much of its criticism resides in government’s undermining experts’ warning, its sloppy mitigating measures, lax administration and disaster coping preparedness. This portrayal emphasizes low trusteeship of the government and makes this image more noticeable and salient to the audience.

Like those of *TKP* and *THT*, the editorials of *TRN* also remained focused on the theme of post-quake government throughout the first four days after April 25. However, while *TKP* and *THT* frame the government dominantly in critical discourses, *TRN* seeks to draw an empathetic response from its readers for “its commitment to leave no stone unturned in the rescue operation” (National Tragedy). Given the magnitude of the disaster and its consequences -- 7.9, human casualties, and physical damage -- *TRN* wishes the April 25 earthquake to be understood just as “a natural phenomenon” which is “beyond human control” (“National Tragedy”). It immediately elevates the disaster to the level of national emergency. By invoking the urgency of the situation – “National Tragedy” and “at this hour of the need” (“National Tragedy”), it calls upon all to collaborate with the government. Much of the focus of this editorial is on the scale of the disaster and the physical disruption it caused.

By framing the earthquake as a “natural phenomenon”, *TRN* seems to naturalize the implication that what happened on April 25 was an overpowering force of nature that no human involvement could have caused or averted. Because the April 25 disaster is “a national tragedy” (“National Tragedy”), which created a situation of “national emergency” (Shift the Focus), *TRN* argues, the onus is on “all the people to extend meaningful support and get actively engaged in this humanitarian operation” (“National Tragedy”). It implies that the aftermath responsibility “in the management of the imaginable disaster” (“Let’s Unite to Overcome Crisis”) is not that of the government alone. The framing of the April 25 earthquake as a “natural phenomenon” and “national emergency” serves two things for the paper. First, by undermining any systematic account of the disaster, it forecloses a larger man-made context or conditions in which the April 25 tragedy occurred. Second, it places the responsibility factor on “all the people” to neutralize any criticism that the government would otherwise face about the management of emergency situation.

The first editorial coverage of *TRN* has been characterized by the positive representations of the “good intention and commitment of the Prime minister and his government” (“National Tragedy”).

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This image of the government continues to feature in the second editorial of *TRN*, “Shift the focus”. In its third editorial, *TRN* reiterates the positive representation of the government for playing an effective role in the entire response process in the aftermath. Couched in a suggestive tone, the paper calls upon the government to utilize relief materials “in a systematic manner” (“Speed up Relief”).

The editorial of April 30 of *TRN* “Let’s Unite to Overcome Crisis” shows a concern about the political power structures engaged in the practices of cronyism. The editorial makes cautionary remarks about possible unfair and skewed distribution of emergency relief with a view to gaining a political advantage by “taking the relief materials only to the districts and constituencies of the powerful lawmakers, ministers and leaders” (“Let’s Unite to Overcome Crisis”). The editorial shows how the powerful political leaders may use the April 25 disaster as a viable site to engage in furthering their own political interest. This publication forewarns against “any embezzlement and misuse of the funds and relief materials collected in the name of the earthquake victims” (“Let’s Unite to Overcome Crisis”).

The readers of *TRN* are exposed to a frame that aims at gaining a wider public acceptance of what the government did in the aftermath. More than the responsibility factor, this paper emphasizes the physical disruption aspect, drawing attention to the severity, scale, and consequences of the disaster. In addition, the paper also comments on the possibility of appropriating the relief funds for a vested political interest.

#### 4. Convergence and Divergence

All the eleven editorials of *THT*, *TKP* and *TRN* stuck to the same dominant theme throughout their initial coverage: post-quake Nepali government and its response to the disaster. However, the analysis revealed that each framed the government differently. Differences can be detected in the strategy used by the editorials. For example, both *THT* and *TKP* harness the history as a source of evidence to bring out the performance history of Nepali government. Their interpretation emanates from a context; they use it as a vantage point for their argument to take off. *TRN*, on the other hand, eludes context and history, and puts up an interpretation that is in favor of the government.

For *THT*, the purpose of the historical reference is to emphasize the poor governance of the government in terms of disaster response. To support this frame, the paper alludes to the “Sunkoshi floods” in which “the government’s glaring lack of skills in managing a big natural disaster” is clearly evidenced in its “inept handling of the consequences” (“Come out with Plan”). Based on this evidence, the paper frames the government in terms of ineptitude and wanting in preparedness.

In *TKP*, the government invokes the history to justify its intervention in the international aids organizations. In a celebratory tone, it hinges on heroic past as a reminder that Nepal has always remained “a proud and sovereign nation” (“People as Partners”). *TKP* notes that the government recruits the very rhetoric of a glorious and autonomous Nepal to provide a reason “to control the international relief efforts” as a way to check interventions. According to the editorial, the government’s concern that “the major international relief effort will weaken the state in the long term” justifies its intention to intervene in the international relief organizations and governments. While the paper frames government’s fear of foreign infringement as “understandable” and shows its solidarity with the government that the country’s autonomy should not be compromised in the name of relief assistance, the editorial also expresses its concern over “the danger...that the government could take an insular stand and seek to project its authority at the expense of the relief effort”. *TKP*

comments that the government's insistence that international groups must "seek consent from the government before delivering aid" and follow "due process to coordinate assistance" is likely to do "great damage to the aid effort". For the paper, rather than being embroiled in a complex bureaucratic process, the government should ease the facilitation procedure by demonstrating "a more flexible attitude" ("People as Partners").

Thus, from as early as the first editorials after April 25, *THT* and *TKP* converge in terms of their critical framing of the post-quake Nepali government. Together, they question its overall disaster coping capacity, examine the arbitrariness of bureaucratic highhandedness, draw on the past to critique performance history, and revive a concern of corruption, absenteeism, and vested political interests. Here, the critical stance of the two papers is clearly discernible.

As we move from the editorials of *THT* and *TKP* to those of *TRN*, the shift is clearly noticeable. While *TKP* and *THT* interpret the government and its functionality more in evaluative and vituperative terms, *TRN* empathizes it. By making the magnitude salient, its editorials eschew the discussion of the context of disaster consequences, like weak law enforcement and experts' warning, perpetuating its own argument that disasters are "beyond human control" ("National Tragedy"). As against this, in *THT* and *TKP*, the disaster of April 25 has been largely attributed to a larger context like the negligence of the government in implementing building codes, indifference to seismologists' warning and failure to communicate it to the public. These papers posit the April 25 tragedy in a context.

Rather than placing the disaster context on human error, *TRN* pitches this rhetoric somewhere else: the magnitude and scale of the disaster. The paper reiterates the overwhelming power of the disaster as a rhetorical motif to signify that no human intervention could have averted the disaster and its consequences. Thus, *TRN* obscures the human negligence in its interpretation of the same tragedy by placing it outside the human control; it decontextualizes the disaster of human responsibility factor and of even larger conditions. Both *THT* and *TKP* introduce historical fact in the post-disaster discourse as a testimony to bring out government's poor performance; on this score, *TRN* gives little information and remains silent. In this sense, *TKP* and *TRN* portray the government in diametrically opposed frames to that of *TRN*. All of the four editorials of *TRN* strongly justify what the government did and sincerely appreciate its aftermath responsibility.

Thus, the analysis of all the three papers reveals divergent frames between *THT* and *TKP* on the one hand, and *TRN* on the other hand. Notwithstanding the contending frames, all the three papers unanimously accept malpractice, political partisanship, lack of political integrity and incompetence as an inescapable fact of the Nepali government. This common perception is, however, the point where all the three papers converge.

The editorial framing of the 2015 disaster projects the image of Nepal and Nepali government at various levels. Broadly speaking, all the papers expose Nepal as being utterly ineptitude in dealing with a crisis situation. They singularly point out failure in terms of disaster preparation, adequate information dissemination, mobilization of foreign relief workers, haphazard relief distribution, political manipulation, and insidious irregularities. Such a framing portrays Nepal as a country that is already languishing in serious internal issues, and as a nation that cannot function on its own, therefore requiring foreign interventions.



However, the papers (*TKP* and *THT*) also envision what a future Nepal should be like. The vision is that of a national project of resilience. They envision to achieve that project at three levels. First, the editorials emphasize the stringent implementation of building codes. Second, they point out the urgency of disseminating knowledge about hazards and vulnerability, the knowledge that we live “in a seismic hotspot” (*TKP*, “Swift Response Need of the Hour”). *TKP* urges the Nepalese communities to be conscious of their precarious existence, an urge for preparation for impending hazards, and the knowledge that they are precariously perched on vulnerable situation. It also expounds the Nepalese communities to be realistic and urge them to overhaul their perspective about earthquake. Third, *THT* focuses on “[a] broad policy as a guide for future action” (“Come out with Plan”) for a strong and resilient Nepal.

The editorials of *TRN* depart from their *TKP* and *THT* counterparts in that while the former subtly hides the contexts in which the 2015 disaster occurred, the latter expose them. The implication is such framing is likely to beget two different categories of readers: those who are constantly exposed to the framing of *TRN* are led to believe that disasters are just the physical occurrences that require no larger contexts to understand them; and another category of readers subjected to the framing of *TKP* and *THT* attempt to understand the larger built conditions like social and political to explicate disasters.

## Conclusion

The theme that resonates dominantly throughout the eleven editorials of *THT*, *TKP* and *TRN* after April 25 is the emergency response of post-quake Nepali government. The analysis revealed that editorials have employed different frames to represent the government and its earthquake responsibility. Adopting a more critical stance, the editorials of *THT* and *TKP* question its institutional capacity, negligence, insidious corruptions, convoluted bureaucratic system, and political posturing. They cite these factors as a major impediment for the smooth and swift execution of the emergency task. The editorials of both the papers draw on the history as a testimony to provide a basis for the explanation of government’s present state of affairs. With this representation, readers of *THT* and *TKP* are left with the rhetoric that the Nepali government has basically remained ineffectual in its overall response to the disaster.

In the representation of the government’s response to the disaster, the argument of editorials of *TRN* is more focused on the severity of the disaster than on the government’s responsibility and preparedness. Unlike *THT* and *TKP*, *TRN* editorials de-emphasize human error or negligence aspect. *TRN* utilizes the magnitude of the disaster to back up its implicit justification that an earthquake like that of April 25 would overwhelm any government. By labeling the April disaster as a force “beyond human control”, the paper induces the reader to accept its interpretation of the April 25 catastrophe and its consequences as an unavoidable natural occurrence with no human involvement. In framing the disaster as a “natural phenomenon” and “national tragedy” (National tragedy 27), the paper generalizes, and to some extent, obscures the responsibility factor.

Thus, the editorials of *THT* and *TKP* reveal a unified perspective. They take an issue with contexts like weak law enforcement, ineffective disaster mitigating mechanism, and undermining experts’ view to engage the human negligence factor in the discussion of the disaster. In *TRN*, this contextual information is made less salient; in it, this larger condition of the disaster discussion pales in significance. Viewed from this perspective, *THT* and *TKP* tend to problematize the April 25 disaster by setting it in larger conditions whereas *TRN* normalizes it by framing the same catastrophe as a

natural event. *THT* and *TKP* consistently maintain the same theme and frame over the first one week after April 25; but during the same period of time, although *TRN* echoes the same theme, it markedly breaks away from them in terms of the frames used. However, all the editorials converge on certain frames: political partisanship, irregularities unpreparedness, and cronyism.

The key point of this study is that framing color people's opinion about what is interpreted in the media. When the media consistently harness a certain frame about a phenomenon, they customize readers to accept or ignore a particular point of view about it. In the context of the 2015 disaster, the editorials of *TKP*, *THT* and *TRN* compete to implant their own interpretations of the earthquake on readers, inducing them to view the post-disaster situation as framed by these papers. As framing is far from being innocuous, its implication entails significant repercussions. In the case of the April catastrophe, the readers of *TKP*, *THT* and *TRN* remain constantly exposed to divergent frames. Those who read *TKP* and *THT* are swayed to view the post-quake government in critical parlance and those who are exposed to *TRN* form a positive image. Such rival frames are most likely to influence the way readers view and interpret the image of Nepali government. They are also likely to struggle to navigate through the maze of editorial interpretations. The danger here is that the confused readers imbibe a fractured view of what actually constitutes a new Nepal and Nepali nation-building. As the selected editorials have privileged a particular frame over others in their representation of the post-quake Nepali government, such a framing in the long run risks forming an ultimate arch of metanarrative to (mis)represent Nepal and Nepali nationalism. Thus, by constantly feeding the readers with the rival frames, rhetorical artifacts like newspaper editorials induce them to accept the proffered frame as the legitimate signifier to view a phenomenon like the 2015 Nepal disaster in a certain way.

As the observations above point, the responsibility of the government and the blame for the consequences is framed by how the disaster is packaged and what meaning or interpretation is attached to it. Accordingly, readers are subjected to different frames that the media compete to impose on; as a result of this they receive a filtered perception of a phenomenon like the 2015 April disaster. As Button states, frames have the "explanatory power to explicate a disaster" (144), the media like the editorials are potentially capable of altering the public perception and discourse of disaster in general.

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