



Nepal: Internal and External Security Challenges

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Introduction

The concept of security has always been a very elusive concept. The concept has been differently defined by different social scientists, organizations as well as by the states. There are number of interpretations of what the definition of security is or what should be as it is largely a contested concept. There are many interpretations of security and each carries different meaning to different stakeholders. Security is considered to be high politics. Thus, what security means, and – as a result – what, or who, is being protected from threats ‘is potentially enabling in terms of ascribing a level of priority and importance to it, or in terms of enabling particular logics of response’.² Barry Buzan also acknowledged this that political power is very closely associated with the concept of security and more so in the past times as security and state were the two sides of the same coin. Buzan further pointed out the fact that, “a powerful political tool in claiming attention for priority items in the competition for government attention”³ As a result security is politically powerful and it is understandable as to why respective groups would want their security be prioritized: security is about “who gets what when and how”.⁴ In the past ages the concept of security was narrowly defined but with passage of time its meaning touches new heights and got widened. It did not remain confined to state-centric but got widened and more importantly human centric dimension was added to it. The security with the changing global situation has changed from conventional meaning to modern one.

The security as mentioned earlier has not remained confined to state but has widened to a very large extent. The human being is facing very difficult times because of the presence of large number of security threats from traditional to non-traditional like abject poverty, human rights violation, rising extremism (of all sorts),

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² McDonald, Matt. 2012. *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change*. London: Routledge

³ Buzan, Barry. 1991. *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

⁴ Lasswell, Harold Dwight. 1936. *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How?* New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.

underdevelopment, child labor, nuclear proliferation, the clash between the state and non-state actors etc. and all these threats can be very challenging to the existence of the human civilizations. Similarly the state of Nepal is also facing certain internal and external threats to its internal sovereignty. The small states like Nepal are increasingly considered in terms of territorial, political, economic and technological security. To this list the Bangladeshi security expert Manniurizzaman adds cultural and psychological dimension, which he considers as “core values of a nation”. The current paper seeks to analyze these traditional and non-traditional security threats and at the same time would also put forward some fruitful suggestions and recommendations for the betterment of the Nepal. Internal conflict has a large number of causes including: the manipulation of ethnic, social or religious divisions; poverty, underdevelopment, crime, corruption, bad government and decisions, environmental decay and population pressure.

Small states also face a host of other threats. Singham suggests that regional hegemons are more likely to intervene in their spheres of influence for political and other reasons including addressing “international scourge” such as drugs. Other transnational threats such as terrorism and mass migration are also on the rise. Small states are also especially susceptible to new trends of interdependence, international regimes, and information age technologies that “change people’s perceptions of community”.

Objectives

- a. To study the conceptual understanding of security
- b. To highlight the major internal security challenges of Nepal.
- c. To highlight the major external security challenges of Nepal
- d. To highlight the policy options for Nepal.

Literature Review

Security Challenges for Small States in the New World Order, written by Pyar Jung Thapa provides a detailed account of security challenges to smaller states in the post-cold war era. The post cold war period is marked by a new multi-dimensional strategic environment giving new focus to international relations and security of small states. This paper analyses the security challenges small states face in the evolving new world order and suggests viable security options for small states in general and Nepal in particular. It analyses the special characteristics of small states and their vulnerability to both traditional and new forms of threats. It relates national interests with world order and makes an in depth.

Perspectives on South Asian Security, edited book by Rajshree Jetly and Shanthie Mariet D’souza, provides a detailed collection of speeches and lectures delivered by political luminaries, practitioners and noted scholars on South Asian security at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. It offers interesting

insights on the emerging security dynamics of South Asia. The issues covered are highly topical and include analyses of the conflict in Afghanistan, counter-terrorism in Pakistan, conflict management in Kashmir, post-conflict restructuring in Nepal and militarization in Asia.

Emerging Security Challenges of Nepal, written and edited by Rajan Bhattarai, Geja Sharma Wagle provides a detailed account of emerging new security challenges to Nepal. The book further provides a detailed account on Nepal as a part of South Asian security setup. The different authors have contributed different topics mostly related with the internal and external security challenges to Nepal.

Human Security in Nepal: Concepts Issues and Challenges, edited by Bishnu Raj Upreti, Rajan Bhattarai, Geja Sharma Wagle provides a detailed account of conceptual understanding about security and other related issues. The book also gives detailed account of security challenges to Nepal like food security, health security, political security, community security and economic security.

The paper on “Nontraditional Security Challenges in Nepal” written by Bishnu Raj Upreti and Sridhar K. Khatri published by The National Bureau of Asian Research. Nepal has undergone phenomenal change over the past 60 years, from the end of the Rana oligarchy to the more recent struggles with the Maoist insurgency. The country is now redefining itself as a democratic federal republic, a challenging transition for any nation. This report examines the nontraditional security challenges confronting Nepal in this new era and assesses the implications for the country’s political future, social policies, and overall security in the region.

China’s growing footprint in Nepal: Challenges and opportunities for India, written by Anil Sigdel and published by *Observer Research Foundation*, Mumbai. The paper highlights the fact that china is extending its influence in Nepal. This brief examines the possibilities for India’s success in competing with China in Nepal, and posits two overarching factors: New Delhi’s overall capacity to challenge China, and India’s political will to address its own controversial approaches towards Nepal. It argues that in the changing geopolitical context, a strongly sovereign Nepal that can exercise an independent foreign policy is beneficial, and not detrimental to India.

“Caught in the India China Rivalry: Policy Options for Nepal”, written by Pramod Jaiswal and published by *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*. The paper highlights the strategic and geopolitical position and significance of Nepal in the region. The paper further elaborates the important policy options before Nepal to balance the India and China influence and the advantages for it.

Theoretical Understanding of the Security

The concept of security is contested and there is no agreement among security experts on the conceptual understanding of the term. There are in fact many definitions

about the concept and every definition carries weight but no definition is certainly inclusive in its nature. Similarly as the concept of security is contested so is the case with its theoretical understanding. There are many security related theories which have been put forward by many theoreticians and each theory differs in understanding the theoretical aspects of the security. There are two strong alternative discourses about the security – Realism and Welsh School critical theory. Each school has fundamentally prescribed different meaning to security and both are forwarding some meaningful understanding about security.

Although all realists theorize the world differently, and thus prescribe a different meaning to security, all definitions tend to revolve around the preservation and protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state.¹ All the realists believe that international system is anarchic because there is no authority above the state and state is the main actor at global level. Furthermore, realism sees security studies as ‘the conditions that make the use of force more likely, the ways that the use of force affects individuals, states and societies, and the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent or engage in war’.²

The Welsh School approach conceptualizes security fundamentally differently to traditional approaches. The Welsh School defines security as emancipation.³ Emancipation is perceived as ‘the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do’.⁴ These ‘physical and human constraints’ are not deterministically defined, but rather are context specific. In contrast to a realist understanding of security, the Welsh School normatively outlines that people should be the referent objects of security as opposed to the state because the moral purpose of the state is to enforce a social contract and protect its population. This is relatively vague which makes operationalizing and applying an emancipatory framework to world politics problematic.⁵ Furthermore, an issue never addressed is how groups and/or individuals can be freed without placing further physical and human constraints on others.

Internal and External Security Concerns

In the *Arthashastra*, Kautilya wrote that a state could be at risk from four types of threats – internal, external, externally-aided internal and internally-aided external. He advised that of these four types, internal threats should be taken care of immediately, for internal troubles, like the fear of the lurking snake, are far more serious than external

¹ Carnesale, Albert and Michael Nacht. 1976. ‘Forward’. *International Security* 1(1): 2.

³ Booth, Ken. 1991. ‘Security and Emancipation’. *Review of International Studies* 17(4): 313326.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ McDonald, Matt. 2012. *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestation over Environmental Change*. London: Routledge

threats. The most dangerous enemy is the enemy within. Kautilya's teachings on internal security and his skillful expression of the warp and weft of internal and external security has great relevance in the globalised 21st century. Destabilizing a country through internal disturbances is more economical and less objectionable, particularly when direct warfare is not an option and international borders cannot be violated. External adversaries, particularly the weaker ones, find it easier to create and aid forces which cause internal unrest and instability.

The present era is the era of globalization where the state security has become the most fundamental issue. The internal as well as external security are both fundamental for the secure existence of the state. It is generally believed that when state is internally secure and stable, there are maximum chances that external security is guaranteed.

Internal Security Threats

Weak Economy

The development is the most contested concept in the current global world because of the fact that there are many interpretations which have been put forward by many political, social as well as economic analysts. The development genuinely means the overall progress of the human being in almost all facets of the life. But economic development is the most dominant side and is the basic criteria which have been given special importance by almost all economists. The economic development is the most daunting challenge before almost all underdeveloped states including the nascent Nepal. Since its independence the state was mostly ruled by undemocratic establishments and because of the unsettled political issues, the country could not economically progress up to the expectations of the common people. But with the adoption of the constitutional document it is believed that unsettled dust may settle down and there is an optimism among the people of the country that future of the state could be promising one.

In last few years, Nepal has achieved progress in several areas. The country managed to have the percentage of people living on less than \$1.25 a day in only seven years, from 53 percent in 2003-04 to 25 percent in 2010-11 and is continuing to make progress. Several social indicators in education, health and gender have also improved. But this is not enough as there are many challenges to economic development as well like poor infra structure, inclusiveness in economic development, unreliable electrical power and low-quality transportation networks are the country's most important economic bottlenecks and hinder job creation and the delivery of services. Secondly the cooperation of public private partnership is necessary for the overall development of the country and currently this sort of partnership is to a larger extent missing. Thirdly some financial institutions remain at risk of insolvency, due to inadequate risk management practices, poor corporate governance and high credit exposure compounded by under-resourced supervision and weak enforcement of prudential norms. The regulatory framework remains weak; operational capacity to manage the fiscal costs of a financial crisis is limited; and so the capacity to prevent and manage potential crises remains a

concern. Fourthly, Agriculture represents an important source of growth and remains, at least over the medium-term, the largest employment sector for over three-quarters of the population. But modern technology is needed to be employed and the need is also to modernize the sector and at the same time hybrid seed is to be used so that agriculture production could increase which will be beneficial for the overall development of the state.

The overall progress of Nepal economy is not inclusive and the present democratic government should devise and take certain economic policy measures for the well being of the common people in the country. The weak economy is the dangerous threat to internal security of Nepal and if the government fails to give priority, it would create some serious fissures in the overall social fabric of the country.

Table 1. Economic Status of Nepal

	Particulars	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012	2012/13
1	Economic Growth Rate	4.3	3.9	4.5	3.6
2	Growth Rate of Agriculture	2.0	4.5	5.0	1.3
3	Growth Rate of Non-agriculture	5.4	3.6	4.2	5.0
4	Population under poverty line	25.4	25.2	24.4	23.8
5	Growth Rate of Employment	3	2.9	2.9	2.9
6	Per-capita Income				721

Source: Draft paper (2013/14-2014/15) of 13th Plan

The growing disparities in development among the different classes as well between the different regions have also contributed towards the internal security threat to the nation. There are some sections of the society which are economically progressing and at the same time some sections are lagging behind and this sort of disparity could prove very fatal to the overall progress of the society and at the same time could pose a serious problem to the country. Growing disparity is dangerous and challenge to the leaders and if not given serious thought, could prove very threatening to the state. The failure of successive governments to address these problems in past decades played an instrumental role in allowing hard left forces like the Maoists and terrorist and criminal groups to consolidate and expand their strength and activities. This caused armed conflict over the last ten years, which led the country to a state of chaos, instability and violence.

Political Instability

Second to economic underdevelopment is political instability which has been there like the shadow. Political instability has marred the state right from the independence because democratic voices have never been respected. The political instability is a serious threat to Nepal's internal security and if not stopped on time, it could engulf and obliterate the whole state. There are many serious reasons to the growing political

instability. The past governments failed to provide security to the public, establish rule of law, maintain peace and create opportunities for development which has further weakened the security situation in the country. This situation has encouraged the extremist's forces to increase their activities for attainment of major objectives. Political instability is the primary cause of providing platform for existing social, economic, political, religious and communal tension which has abetted for the increase in the internal security challenges. The bad governance has equally derailed and badly impacted the governance system of the country. There is a growing as well deep trust deficit between the governing class and common people. The new government has to ensure the corruption free good governance to the people.

It is challenging to maintain peace and security when there is culture of violating the rule of law in the name of fundamental rights. Illegal strike of the trade unions in factories and industries, padlock in universities, practices of imposing pressure by closing academic institutions, transportation blockade and disorganized demonstration on the streets affect internal security environment. Though it is quite usual to impose pressure for one's rights, but illegal activities related to imposing pressure can lead to violence and break down of the rule of law.

Political parties are equally responsible for the deteriorating political environment in the state. Activities of political parties like closure, strike, disobedience of law and political protection of criminals further create obstacle to internal security. The nexus between the political Parties and criminal or armed groups is also a stumbling block in the maintenance of peace and order in the society. For instance, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) decided to boycott the second Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. In the name of boycotting the election, the CPN-M indulged in a number of violent activities where two people were killed and many others were injured in the petrol bomb explosions.

Forced Migration and HIV/AIDS

Another major concern related to migration and security is the increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS, since large numbers of the temporary migrant population working in India and also internal migrant groups have become infected. This is associated with their high mobility and migration, but also with the trafficking of women and children, commercial sex workers, intravenous drug users, and the high rate of sexually transmitted infection (STI). High mobility, (both internal and external) migration, and poverty are overwhelmingly considered to be the root causes of the high incidence of HIV/AIDS both in Nepal and elsewhere. Forced migration has become another major security issue for Nepal in recent years. The violent conflict over the past ten years and the existence of many armed groups in the Tarai region has induced internal displacement. It is estimated by various organizations working in this field, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) and the Informal Service Sector (INSEC), that up to 200,000 people have been internally displaced during the ten years of the Maoists' 'People's War'.

Displacement was caused by both sides, i.e. both by the Maoists and by the Army's excessive use of force and the abuses it committed. Due to the increasing insecurity and threat posed by these armed groups, people fled their own native villages and sought refuge either in their district headquarters or in major cities like Kathmandu, Nepalgunj, Pokhara and Biratnagar. Though no exact figure is available, it is estimated that a large number of people, particularly from the Mid West and Far West regions also fled to India, which has for a long time been a popular migration destination for Nepalese people. They go to cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Hyderabad and work in very unsafe and unhealthy environments, and then return with number of problems, including HIV/AIDS. The security and care of people infected with HIV/AIDS is another issue that the state now needs to focus on, particularly in Far Western Districts such as Achham, Bajhang, Kailali, Bajura, Baitadi etc.

Environmental Insecurity

Another serious and grave threat to Nepal today is environmental insecurity. The fast degradation of shared rivers, the frequent bursting of glacier lakes and increasing landslides and floods due to torrential rain falls in the mid-mountains are just some of the issues facing Nepal today on the environmental front. Furthermore, increasing urbanization and the growth of unplanned city centres have created serious threats to the health of urban people. A report published by the Asian Development Bank stated that the capital city Kathmandu has become the most polluted city in Asia in recent years. The environment insecurity has been very damaging not only to the social structure but to the economic development as well. The 2014 earth quake was very damaging and it also shows the major shifts in weather of the country and at the same time shows environmental change because of different reasons. This environmental degradation is a challenging task before the Nepal leaders who have to devise short term and long term policies for the protection of the environment and environment security is very important for the overall development of the nation. The sustainable development of the country is not possible without the environmental sustainability and all other developmental aspects are dependent on environmental sustainability.

New Constitution and Accommodation of Madhesis

The emerging internal security challenge with the adoption of new constitution in Nepal is Madhesi issue in the south of Nepal. Though the new constitution is adopted by the majority with 85 percent support (20 September 2015) but there are certain reservations to the Madhesi people against the constitution. The new constitution has failed to satisfy the Madheshis and Tharus who constitute 70 per cent of the Terai population, who regard the formation of seven federal provinces as per the Constitution as grossly unfair to them. The 5 districts of the Terai region – namely Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Kanchanpur and Kailali has been joined with the hill districts, with the sole purpose of converting the local people into a minority. The Madheshis and Tharus were sidelined in the entire constitution making process due to prevailing distrust towards them among the mainstream political parties. Of course, the Bijay Kumar Gachhadar-

led Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum–Democratic was initially involved in the constitution drafting process; but later on it also had no option but to quit the alliance as its point of view was not entertained.

Consequently, none of the major Madhes-based parties signed the Constitution, which they believe suffers from serious flaws. The new Constitution has a provision for a 165-member Parliament, but the constituencies have been demarcated in such a way that the hill and mountain region would get 100 seats, despite the fact that their share in Nepal's total population is less than 50 per cent. On the other hand, the Terai region constituting over half of the country's population has been allocated only 65 seats.

Because of the insensitivity shown towards the demands of the Madhesi parties, a call was given by the Unified Democratic Madhesi Front and Tharuhat/ Tharuwan Joint Struggle Committee for an indefinite strike in Terai beginning from August 8, 2015.

Civil War in Nepal

Another important security threat which though has been abated by signing peace accord is the confrontation between Maoist insurgents and Government forces. Nepal has been ruled by hereditary prime ministers from the Rana clan¹ or monarchs from the Shah family² since the 18th century. A multiparty interlude from 1959-1960 ended when King Mahendra, father of Gyanendra, suspended the constitution following the election victory of the Nepali Congress Party. From then until 1990 a variety of constitutional formats emerged – none of which allowed for genuinely free political parties. Coming under increasing internal and external pressure, Nepal re-established multiparty democracy within the framework of a constitutional monarchy in 1990. However, democracy failed to quell Nepal's chronic political instability in the 1990s. Maoist rebels began a violent insurgency campaign against the government in rural areas from 1996, attempting to establish a People's Republic. As the pattern of strikes and later bombings intensified through 2001 and 2002, Nepal's constitutional and political order seemed under threat of disintegration. On July 22, 2001 Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba announced a unilateral ceasefire against the Maoists, which they immediately reciprocated. But the Maoists broke the ceasefire in November 2001, launching coordinated attacks on army and police posts. The conflict intensified over the following year and drew in the full participation of the Royal Nepalese Army. In October 2002, King Gyanendra, facing a growing debate over potential plans to extend the state of emergency as a means to combat the Maoist insurgency, dismissed the government, assumed executive power and assured the public elections would be held in a timely

¹ The Rana dynasty was a Khas dynasty which claimed Rajput ancestry which ruled the Kingdom of Nepal from 1846 until 1951, reducing the Shah monarch to a figurehead and making Prime Minister and other government positions hereditary.

² The Shah Dynasty was the ruling dynasty of the Gorkha Kingdom until 1768 and of the Kingdom of Nepal from 1768 to May 28, 2008. The dynasty claimed ancestry in the Parmara clan of Rajputs of Rajasthan India.

fashion. However, the insurgency made the holding of elections impossible, and parliament remained disbanded. A January 2003 ceasefire between government and Maoist insurgents collapsed in August that year, sparking a catastrophic return to mass violence: over 1,000 died in the following four months alone. Although the reappointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba as prime minister in June 2004 marked an attempt to heal the rift between the palace and political parties, this ended with the royal coup on February 1, 2005.

King Gyanendra faced an unlikely and unstable opposition coalition, established in November 2005, between seven of the 'constitutional' parties then shut out of politics and the Maoist rebels. This coalition reached a 12-point agreement on a common programme for reestablishing democracy in the country. Some previously mainstream politicians began to question whether the King himself could be part of any solution; indeed, there were independent analysts who increasingly wondered whether the Monarchy itself might ultimately be a casualty of the crisis. This was certainly what the Maoists wished for. However, the end of the monarchy was not part of what became known as the Seven-Party Alliance-Maoist agreement. The security situation had become highly dangerous in many parts of the country by the end of 2005. The Maoists ended a three-month unilateral ceasefire in January 2005. Although they claimed that they controlled up to 90 per cent of the country, the figure was probably nearer to one-third. However, they were able to conduct operations in most of the rest of the country, including areas close to the capital, Kathmandu. The Royal Government arrested hundreds of political opponents and clamped down on the media. Its security forces were accused of being behind many 'disappearances', extra-judicial killings and cases of torture of political opponents. The Maoists also committed gross human rights violations in the course of their armed struggle.

Despite widespread domestic and international opposition to his plans, the King announced that municipal elections would be held on February 8, 2006 as the first stage in a 'transition to democracy'. Fears about the credibility of the municipal elections were borne out by events. Turn-out was extremely low (latest estimated at 22 per cent) and the day was marked by protests against the Royal Government in many parts of the country: The elections triggered a full-blown political crisis. The Seven-Party Alliance and the Maoists announced that they would impose a blockade on the capital, Kathmandu, and launch an indefinite general strike in early April 2006. As the crisis deepened, the bulk of the international community appeared to lose patience with the King. The United States was the most reluctant to criticize him, but even it began to acknowledge that his actions had deepened the crisis. The general strike began on 5 April 2006. After 19 days of escalating protests, on 24 April King Gyanendra announced that he would reinstate Nepal's dissolved Parliament and hand over power to the Seven-Party Alliance. A previous offer on 2005 to appoint a new government (he disbanded the previous one in February 2005 in a 'royal coup') was rejected by the popular movement mobilized against him, despite considerable pressure on it from most of the diplomatic community to accept the offer. The 2006 announcement was a clear victory

for the Seven-Party Alliance and Maoists. The Maoists were quick to claim credit for the fact that the social base of the popular movement included the poor, ethnic minorities, Dalits and other marginalized groups in society. In capitulating, the King also unreservedly accepted the November 2005, 12-point agreement which had been the basis for the cooperation between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Maoists. This opened the way to the election of a Constituent Assembly to revise the 1990 Constitution and for peace talks with the Maoists. The Maoists hoped that the Constituent Assembly would ultimately lead to the establishment of a Republic.

The new Government established on April 30, 2006, led by Nepali Congress (NC) veteran Girija Prasad Koirala, took a number of important steps towards creating a new democratic order in Nepal. With the endorsement of Parliament, the King was ordered to pay tax on income and property. He was stripped of his status as a divine ruler and lost his immunity from prosecution. The Government also took upon itself powers to appoint (or not) his successor. The 'Royal' in the title of the Nepalese Army was removed and the King's authority over it taken away. The Government is no longer 'His Majesty's Government'. There were moves to end media censorship, including in the crucial sphere of broadcasting. There was controversy over the decision to end Nepal's unique status as a Hindu nation by declaring it a secular state. The new Government also declared the deeply flawed February 2006 municipal elections invalid and granted compensation to the families of all those killed by the security forces in the course of the April protests. Investigations into such killings and other abuses were initiated. All political appointments made by the King since the King's October 2002 seizure of power were also revoked by the Government. In addition, it undertook a review of judicial and civil service appointments since that date. Royal expenditure also came under close scrutiny, including military procurement deals. The Supreme Court also ordered the release of three members of King Gyanendra's cabinet who had been detained when the new Government took power.

Perhaps surprisingly, many of these moves were met with a mixture of ambivalence and hostility on the part of the Maoists, who argued that major constitutional changes should only be made by the elected Constituent Assembly provided for in the 12-point agreement of November 2005. Nonetheless, the Maoists declared themselves ready to take part in substantive peace talks with the new Government. They declared a three-month ceasefire on 26 April. The new Government reciprocated. Renewed peace negotiations (the first since 2003) began on 26 May. At those talks, a 25-point code of conduct was agreed, designed to end violence and intimidation, while negotiations proceeded. A second round of talks took place in June 2006. The parties signed an 8-point agreement at the talks, which provided for (amongst other things) the dissolution of Parliament, the formation of a broader-based Interim Government and Interim Legislature, both of which would include the Maoists, and the participation of the UN in monitoring a future disarmament process. An interim Constitutional drafting committee was also established. In July tensions arose between the Seven-Party Alliance and the Maoists. Elements within the former were unhappy about the proposal

to dissolve Parliament, while there was unease on the Maoist side about the terms of disarmament. However, the ceasefire held and discussions continued. Koirala and the Maoist leader Prachanda often became directly involved. By September 2006, following an impressive show of strength in the form of a short nationwide shutdown, the peace talks got back on track.

In October 2006, the parties agreed that a Constituent Assembly, which would double up as a Legislature, would be elected in June 2007. With the UN Secretary-General's Personal Representative, Ian Martin, playing an important role, negotiations advanced throughout November 2006. On 21 November the Government and the Maoists signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), in which an end to the war was formally declared and the contours of a transition agreed. On 28 November the parties also signed an Agreement on the Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies (AMMA). It was witnessed by Ian Martin on behalf of the UN. The Maoists had strongly resisted pressure to disarm at this stage of the peace process, fearing a trap. While the CPA and the AMMA were a massive step towards peace and the restoration of democracy in Nepal, many pitfalls remained along the way. The first deadlines for forming an Interim Legislature and Government were missed. However, the Interim Legislature met for the first time on 15 January 2007. The composition of the 83-strong Maoist delegation is strongly biased towards previously excluded groups. The old Parliament was dissolved simultaneously. An Interim Government was established on the following day. Although the Maoists did not join immediately, negotiations continued to facilitate their participation. An Interim Constitution was also endorsed by the first meeting of the Interim Legislature and came into force. Concerns were expressed as to whether free and fair elections to a Constituent Assembly would be possible by June 2007, as scheduled. The deployment of UN arms monitors also got under way. Seven main cantonment sites for Maoist forces were agreed in AMMA, where fighters were to be assembled and arms and ammunition locked in secure stores. Both would be registered by the UN, but the Maoists would keep the keys to the stores as part of the deal. The plan was for the Nepali Army to put a similar number of weapons under supervision. In early January 2007 an advance team of 35 UN arms monitors began making inspection visits to the cantonments. The process of locking up and registering weapons and personnel formally began on January 15, 2007, triggered by the convening of the Interim Legislature. The Maoists continued to allow instances of intimidation, extortion and abductions by their cadres to go unpunished, although there were indications that such abuses had declined in recent months. Many rural areas remained effectively under the control of Maoist cadres and militias. The militias were distinct from the People's Liberation Army and were not covered by AMMA. The Maoist 'people's governments' were due to dissolve with the establishment of an Interim Government. The Army and King, while now formally powerless, reluctantly acquiesced in the changes introduced following the political crisis in April 2006. The report of an investigation into abuses of state power and funds since the royal coup of 2005 recommended that action should be taken against 202 people, including

Gyanendra. Western donors kept a distance from the peace process, while declaring their broad support for it, leaving India and the UN to take the lead. However, they remained nervous about the intentions of the Maoists.

The recent transition and adoption of constitution and the present government led by mostly leftist members could usher Nepal into prosperous nation but for that, the present dispensation should try to resolve the internal conflicts with all the stakeholders and usher the nation towards the better future where every citizen could live a happy and promising life.

External Threats to Nepal

The impact of India–China Rivalry on Nepal

Chinese interest in Nepal made a U-turn in 2008, when bloody protests erupted on the Tibetan plateau. One of China's core interests in Nepal has been to minimize the political activities of Tibetan refugees, which China views as potential threat to its own security. The extended anti-Chinese protests in the streets of Kathmandu in April and May 2008—immediately preceding the Beijing Olympics—seem to have worried the Chinese authorities. Beijing has consistently linked economic and military aid to Kathmandu's adherence to a "One China" policy, a thinly veiled reference to Nepal's ban on political demonstrations by Tibetan exiles.

Over the years, China has increased its aid to Nepal. China has pledged USD 140 million assistance to Nepal during Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to Kathmandu on January 14, 2012. During discussions with Nepali counterpart Babu Ram Bhattarai, the Chinese leader was also positive to extend support for infrastructure development of the impoverished landlocked country, which may run into more than USD 5 billion. China also pledged to construct an international airport in the second largest city, Pokhara, three large hydropower stations in the west and improvements of roads and creating rail networks. This shows the level of importance China has attached to its close door neighbor on the south. On a similar light, India also pledged approximately USD 220 million grants to Nepal for the year 2012-13. The figures show that Nepal received grants worth approximately USD 130 million in 2010-11 and USD 117 million in 2011-12. These increasing official development assistance (ODA) grants clearly illustrate that India is competing China on all fronts. Actually Indian ODA figures show that it is only Afghanistan and Bhutan who received more grant aid than Nepal who comes in third on the list from fifth in the region.

Similarly, as a sign of growing rivalry between both nations, China last year committed to provide Nepal with USD 19.8 million in "non-lethal" military aid. This is the biggest amount doled out by Nepal's northern neighbor as military assistance. China had earlier provided USD 2.6 million in non-lethal military aid and communication logistics worth USD 3 million. This is a strategic move by Beijing as New Delhi was the biggest provider of military assistance to Nepal, but it stopped supplying lethal

military aid since former king Gyanendra Shah's royal takeover¹ in 2005 even though both Indian and Nepalese military has historical ties.² These new intrusions into the security and defense sectors of Nepal's - structurally speaking – most stable political institution sparked a response from the Indian side as New Delhi also gave the nod to resume the assistance during a bilateral talk held between Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister of Nepal Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar and his Indian counterpart AK Antony in early 2012. It is noteworthy that “Beijing would rather deal direct with the Nepalese Army than with the government, and this reflects the perceived status and stability of Nepal's army relative to the government” (Campbell 2012).

In another layer of competition over Nepal's security situation was the Indian suspicion around 2009 that the Maoists were collaborating with China to establish a one-party dominated People's Republic by its attempt to influence Nepalese Military. The Maoists' government's move to sack the chief of the Nepalese Army and to replace him with a 'sympathetic general' was perceived as the last straw for India, which saw it as an indirect move by Beijing to extend its influence on Nepal's military. In a late-night decision, the then President Ram Baran Yadav used his prerogative as the ceremonial supreme army commander to reinstate the army chief. The other political parties in the coalition withdrew their support and the then Prime Minister Prachanda resigned on May 4, 2009. In Kathmandu this was seen as India directly interfering in the reinstatement of the army chief by lobbying the parties for its interests – a move with huge ramifications for the rivalry between India and China and for the domestic polity in Nepal.

Recently, the power play between China and India for influence in Nepal has turned electric, as China has signed a USD 1.8 billion agreement to develop the 760-megawatt (MW) West Seti Project hydropower plant in Nepal. The deal marks the Asian giant's entry into a lucrative sector in the Himalayan nation — water and power — that has been dominated by India for years. It comes at a time when several other major hydropower projects, mainly developed with Indian investment, have stalled for various reasons, including protests by Maoists against the awarding of deals to foreign companies labeling it as “unfair share” of hydropower projects in Nepal. In the beginning of 2012, the Maoists burned the project office of the Upper Karnali Project (900MW), which was awarded to GMR of India.

¹King Gyanendra on February 1, 2005 sacked the interim government, suspended civil liberties and imposed emergency rule and took over the government under his leadership and put the major political party leaders under house arrest. The International community including India was against this move and referred it as a serious blow to the democracy in Nepal.

²There is a long tradition of exchange of high-level goodwill visits between the two armies. It began in 1950 with the visit of former Indian army chief Gen K M Cariappa. On such goodwill visits, both Army Chiefs of Nepal and India would be conferred with honorary title of Chief of each other's military due to the historic connection between Nepal and India.

China's renewed interest in its southern neighbor is not entirely a quid pro quo. In Kathmandu, Chinese tour groups visit the tourist enclave of Thamel and Pokhara, where they frequent Chinese-run restaurants, bookstores, and hospitals. According to the Chinese embassy in Nepal, projects such as the Birendra International Convention Center (now used as Parliament Building) and the capital city's main highway are evidence that "China treats Nepal as its closest neighbor and best friend." Although these initiatives aim to signify the softer side of Chinese-Nepali ties, China ultimately appears most interested in stifling "anti-Chinese" activities on Nepal's soil. Beijing seems less concerned with Kathmandu's political jockeying than with ensuring that the next government is as pliant as the current one. The Chinese strategy has been to focus fewer resources on national politics and more on localized economic aid, such as building schools in politically sensitive border areas. China main concern appears to be stability not who is governing Kathmandu. For China, the ideological difference doesn't make any difference. They had a very good relation with the king. They had a very good relationship with the Nepali Congress party. Beijing also appears to have a good working relation with the present Maoist led government and party and they will have relation with whoever emerges as a stabilizing force in Nepal.

Besides deepening political and military ties, the proliferation of China Study Centers (CSC) across Nepal has also generated a lot of interest and apprehensions in India. According to various news sources in India (Samata 2008; Parashar 2009)¹ 'the CSC which started as a benign China-supported informal civil society group in 2000 to promote cultural interaction is growing in membership and has become an effective tool to promote the Chinese perspective on key issues concerning Nepal.' Media sources have identified more than 33 such centers, most of which are located in close proximity to Nepal's border with India. These provide Chinese language and culture classes and are often manned by volunteers from China. While enabling greater access to information about Chinese social and economic development, these centers also provide a convenient platform for the dissemination of Chinese policy towards South Asia and India's role therein. Similarly China Radio International has launched a local FM radio station in Kathmandu with the purpose of bringing China closer to Nepal. China is providing "volunteer" teachers to various schools in Nepal who give Chinese language lessons to Nepali students and exposure to Chinese culture. These are evidences of Chinese so-called "cultural exchange" initiatives and are part of the soft power component of China's foreign policy (Jha 2010; Schmidt 2008).²

On the political front, the competition between the two Asian giants is also impacting the political development of Nepal. Even though China has good relations with all political sectors it is unsure about the polity due to the current political stalemate. So unlike India, which has a direct influence in Nepalese polity due to its

¹ Samata, Pranab Dahal. 2008. "Pro-China Centers, calling for reduced ties with Delhi, sprout along Nepal border with India", *Indian Express*, February 11, 2008

long-due historical, cultural, economic and political engagement with the monarchy and Congress party, the Chinese strategy seems to establish equidistance relations with the most important political parties and cordially and mutually reinforce its policy direction with economic incentives.

These are testimony that India and China are now in fierce competition in Nepal both in-terms of geo-political and geo-strategic terms. Even though, Nepal's relation with India is a very special relationship, however the recent developments in the bilateral relations have greatly damaged the atmosphere. It is in this background that Chinese influence has been growing in geo-strategic terms.

Tibetan & Bhutanese refugees

Another important external security threat to Nepal is growing refugee problems. Crippled with the destruction caused by the bloody Maoist insurgency which has taken 13,000 lives since 1996, Nepal has the additional burden of harbouring refugees from the neighbouring countries. Jhapa and Morang that shelter the Bhutanese refugees are considered the two most politically volatile districts of the country. The refugees entered Nepal through India in the early 1990s as Nepal and Bhutan do not share a border with each other. At times, the refugees forcefully have tried to do the same in their quest to go back to their rightful motherland. On August 3, 2005, about 300 refugees from Beldangi Camps I, II and III moved towards the Mechi Bridge in the Indo-Nepal border. They were led by S. B. Subba (Chairman, Human Rights Organization of Bhutan) and others from the Bhutan Gorkha National Liberation Front. There was a stone-throwing incident and three journalists were injured as the refugees were not allowed to cross into Indian Territory by the Sashastra Seema Bala, India's paramilitary force. This incident naturally exposed the double-standard policy adopted by India concerning the Bhutanese refugees while greatly embarrassing Thimpu as the clash at the Indo-Nepal border received international media coverage.

There are deep frustrations as the second generation of refugees, now in their teens, is keen for an armed struggle rather than "wasting time" in dialogue or negotiations. In fact, radicalization may take different forms. Many refugees are encouraged from the success of the Nepalese Maoists while others want to shake hands with separatist groups such as the United Liberation Front of Asom. The million-strong Nepali Diaspora in India can also turn sympathetic to the cause of their fellow brethren in Bhutan. A sub-region that is already unstable due to several ethnic and separatist movements could turn explosive if the Bhutanese refugee problem is not resolved as soon as possible.

Of the estimated 131,000 Tibetans living outside Tibet, there are 100,000 in India, 25,000 in Nepal 2,000 each in Bhutan and Switzerland, 600 in Canada and 1,500 in the United States. Under a "gentleman's agreement" between Nepal and the UNHCR, Tibetans arriving in Kathmandu are permitted to transit safely through Nepal. Most refugees are then transferred to the government-in-exile set up by the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in northern India, while others apply for visa for the United States and its

embassy in Kathmandu provides them with the travel permit. Those who prefer to live in Nepal enter the lucrative carpet-weaving business whereas others open up lodges and hotels. Most of the hotels in Boudha or Thamel area of Kathmandu are run by Tibetans. This has been the established pattern for the last half a century.

It is only when the refugees begin engaging in anti-China activities that provoked the Nepal government. With nudges from Beijing, the Nepali administration sometimes hands over identified activists in the guise of refugees to the Chinese police and even closes down the Refugee Welfare Office like it did in January 2005. Immediately after the closure, Brad Adams, Asia Director of the Human Rights Watch, said, “The Refugee Welfare Office has been a critical safety net for tens of thousands of persecuted Tibetans. Closing the office leaves thousands of Tibetan refugees without crucial support. It is unclear how the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which has worked closely with the Tibetan Refugee Welfare office, can continue its activities in support of Tibetan refugees in Nepal.” Similarly, in June 2003, Nepal handed back escaping refugees to China and received international condemnation including that from the United States senators, the State Department, the European Union parliamentarians and the UNHCR itself. Human rights organizations, in criticizing the action said, “It has set a frightening precedent for the treatment of Tibetans trying to flee to safety.” However, one can understand Nepal walking on a tight rope – squeezed by two giants on either side; it has to tread carefully in between major international powers, donor countries and multilateral financial institutions. It can ill-afford to annoy anyone of them and this, at times, becomes a grueling diplomatic task.

This problem is going to harm the security of Nepal which presently is going through very tuff times and the need is to devise a security mechanism to control the flow of refugees.

Economic Blockade

Another very important recent external security threat to Nepal is economic blockade. Nepal is a landlocked state and this landlockedness is a perpetual concern to Nepal security. The current stalemate between India and Nepal over different issues from new constitution to economic blockade, new map adopted by Nepali parliament has brought the relationship between the two states to a new low. India has raised certain concerns about the new constitution and also has adopted aggressive economic diplomacy to fulfil its interests as well the interests of Madhesi community in Nepal. The stalemate continues to elude the better understanding between the two sides and at the same time has posed serious security concerns to Nepal. The recent developments have great significance as China factor is very much visible on the bilateral relations.

This kind of security concern would remain there until the relationship between the two states would get institutionalized and for that both states should try to resolve the differences. It is certain that Nepal has to keep this thing in mind that India is leading and big country in the region and this kind of fact could not be wished off and at the

same India should also keep this thing in mind that Nepal is a sovereign state as well as the neighbor and maintenance of good ties with it could not be sidelined.

Recommendations and Suggestions

To ensure peace and security in the society by meeting those serious threats, the Government of Nepal should take some policy level, institutional and organizational steps at the earliest possible. The following suggestions are imperative to assure internal security as well as external.

1. Internal and external security threats are arduous and multidimensional. Therefore the government should draft multidimensional national security policy.
2. National security policy of Nepal should be drafted in line with the broader concept of human security.
3. The security agencies of Nepal (the Nepal Army, the Nepal Police, the Armed Police Force, and the National Investigation Department) need to be mobilized for the effective maintenance of the rule of law.
4. The Government of Nepal should enhance the capacity of security agencies to boost their professionalism, ability and performance by providing advanced trainings, technology and instruments.
5. Nepal is at high risk of disaster caused by natural calamities, climate change, destruction of forest and environment, unplanned urbanization, manmade physical structures, etc. Hence, with the view of providing assistance and relief to the victims as well as reducing and managing such incidents, the security agencies should be developed as competent agencies in dealing those challenges.
6. Armed and criminal groups that are active in the country should be identified and disarmed. Their political demands should be addressed through dialogues processes. Criminal, illegal and armed groups should be brought under control of the government as per the law.
7. Inclusive economic development is of paramount importance for the overall progress of the state. There are rising economic inequalities in the Nepali society and the growing inequality could obliterate the already feeble society.
8. Political stability is fundamental for the existence of the states. Lack of political stability could pose serious challenges to the state and Nepal cannot afford to live for long with political instability. The immediate need is to take all the stakeholders into consideration for the better nation building.

9. The question of India-China influence cannot be wiped-out from the foreign policy of Nepal, but need is to balance India-China conundrum because both nations are equally important as far as the peaceful Nepal is concerned.
10. The state of Nepal has suffered a lot from the fragmented nationalism in the past. The transition from Monarchy to a democratic setup is positive one but it should be sustained strengthened as well as democratized to make it more liberal democracy.
11. The post-constitution adoption scenario in Nepal has shown certain dangerous cracks in the state which if not solved immediately could prove very suicidal to the future of the nation. In fact it is not the question of Madhesi community or of Terai region only but it is the future of nation as a whole which is at stake, so the need is to accommodate every section of the Nation.

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