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Scenarios of Potential Unconventional Security Threats as Public Policy Concern for Nepal

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Abstract

This paper is about drawing different scenarios of potential unconventional security threats in Nepal as a major public policy concern. However, not much work has been done so far in this issue so far and therefore need greater attention. The aim of this paper is to draws different potential unconventional security threats in Nepal. While analyzing the unconventional security challenges, I have used the analytical formwork of four conceptual parameters like a) Understanding and commitment of domestic actors, b) domestic coping capacity, c) external geo-strategic interests and d) Sudden devastations and natural calamities. Based on these parameters I have drawn three different scenarios of unconventional security and consequent security risks. The methods used to collect primary and secondary data were observation, content analysis, in-depth interviews and literature review. This paper concludes that unconventional security situation depends on domestic coping capacity, commitment of policy decision makers, degree and intensity of external geo-strategic, political, economic, and other security interests and frequency and degree of natural calamities. The paper concludes that Nepal is in potentially high risks of unconventional security challenges and national unity is essential to handle with the future potential unconventional challenges.

Introduction

The global context is rapidly changing. Existing power relations are altered, traditionally powerful countries are losing their power grip and new power centers are emerging and expanding. In the same way, the security dynamics is also changing and new concepts, perspectives and issues are emerging and dominating global security debate. Powerful (in terms of military, economy, research and education, science and technology, etc.) countries are heavily engaged in new security debate (such as USA, UK, members of European Union, Canada and many others).

The purpose of this paper is to document latest unconventional security issues and related security challenges of Nepal as policy concerns.

For the purpose of this paper unconventional security (UCS) is elaborated as nontraditional or non-military security concerns such as water security, food security, health security, environmental security, climate security, economic security, social security, poverty, and so on, in absence of them create security challenges. UCS also covers terrorism, transnational crimes, cyber security, artificial intelligence, disasters and natural calamities, and their nexus (Upreti et.al, 2023).

Similarly, for the purpose of this paper, public policy is defined as a roadmap of a government to deliver its responsibilities as per the constitutional spirit and provisions and to achieve for the wellbeing of people (Rijal & Upreti 2022). It entails wide range of provisions including, constitution, laws, strategies developed for the effective implementation of the state responsibilities.

Methodological Notes

The information required to develop this paper is collected by using observation, one-to-one in-depth interview, review of literature, and content analysis of newspapers and social media focusing to main unconventional security issues such as natural calmatives and disasters, refugees, pandemics, environment insecurities and climate risks, food insecurity, water insecurity, insecurity from religious extremism, bad governance, violation human right and transitional injustices, contestation in citizenship issue, trade concerns (including blockade), insecurity posed by advancement of information technology and artificial intelligence, as some of major sources of insecurity.

This paper is being a synthesis of the works done by the author in the last 15 years. It is developed based on own observation, knowledge and experiences and complemented by synthesis and reflection from the perspectives, opinions, viewpoints of hundreds of experts, opinion makers, policy makers, activists, researchers and academics working in the unconventional security and public policy debates. The both sources were further strengthened by secondary sources. Hence, the methodology implied in this paper is implicit and different than the standard survey type having standard sample-size, which could be new to those who are not familiar with this approach of writing.

I have also amply utilized secondary sources of information from print materials and websites for substantiating the arguments in the paper.

Findings: Major Unconventional Security Issues as Major Source of Insecurity

In this section, I am presenting the findings concerning some of the key unconventional security related policy issues to be dealt by government. Current global context is highly volatile and insecure because of multiple complexities (such as climate change effects, poverty, inequalities, tension between powerful countries e.g., USA-China, USA-Russia, India-China, India-Pakistan, and so on).

According to wisevoter.co (a web portal operates based on the leadership principles of George Washington and provides information, insights, and tools that amplify democracy in the modern age) currently in 2023, Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, Syria and Yemen are facing civil war, whereas Algeria Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, and Uganda are suffering from terrorist insurgency. Likewise, Colombia and Mexico are fighting drug war. Likewise, Russia and Ukraine are in active war. Similarly, South Sudan is facing serious ethnic violence. Poor and weaker countries are affected more form such insecure environment. Hence, it is a high time for policy makers, decision makers and key actors of country to proactively act on minimizing from these security risks. Some of the major unconventional security risks are discussed below:

Natural Calamities and Disasters

Disasters and natural calamities are related to extremes of or catastrophes from severe weather, earthquake, forest fire, flash flood, land and mudslides, hurricanes, volcanoes and so on and they pose serious threat to human health and safety, property, critical infrastructure, and consequently national security (Matthew and Upreti, 2018; Mandel, 2002). During the time and aftermath of natural calamities and disasters, people witness and psychologically feel helpless, insecure, confused and undergone in the stage of trauma (Mandel, 2002). Life and livelihoods of affected people were severely disrupted.

Earthquake is one of the major sources of insecurities and causes of billions of damages and thousands of human lives. We have recently pushed a research paper which highlights the devastating effects of 2015 earth quick as, *"According to the Post Disaster Need Assessment Report (PDNA) published in late 2015, 8,790 people lost their lives, 22,300 were injured, and more than half a million houses were destroyed or damaged, affecting 8 million people--almost one-third of the population from 31 of the country's 75 districts. 14 of the 31 affected districts were declared as 'crisis-hit;' another 17 districts were deemed partially affected. The greatest damage took place in rural areas, leaving poor and vulnerable people largely alone for extended periods"* (Mathew and Upreti, 2018, P4)

The aftermath of disasters and natural calamities always creates deep insecurity, instability and escalates pre-existing problems in society. It promotes social injustice, inequality, mal-governance, corruption and irregularities. It further severely undermines access to livelihood options, clean water, food, property, homes, health care, and

children's education. Manipulation of this situation by evil elites consequently poses severe threats to national security (Mathew and Upreti, 2018).

Nepal is one of the high flood risk countries because of its terrain, nature of flash floods and weak water management capacity. According to a report prepared by the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, *"The fragile geology and steep topography has made Nepal the 20th topmost disaster-prone country in the world. Among 200 countries, Nepal ranks 4th, 11th and 30th with regard to relative vulnerability to climate change, earthquake and flood hazards respectively. It faces high magnitudes and intensities of a multitude of natural hazards such as flood, landslide, earthquake, fire, cold waves, hailstone, windstorm, thunderbolt, cloudburst, drought, Glacier Lake outburst flood (GLOF), avalanches and epidemics. Unstable steep slopes and fragile geological formation of a young mountain range with heavy monsoon rainfall leads to a wide range of geological and hydro-meteorological disasters across the country. The variation in geological characteristics, together with torrential rain during rainy season, result in landslides, debris flows, floods, etc."* (Khanal, 2019: p. 7).

Several time flash floods have caused severe damages in Nepal. In the recent history, the flood of 1993 in Central Nepal, the 2008 Koshi flood caused by breakage of embankment of Koshi Barrage, severe floods of the 2013, 2014 and 2017 in the mid- and far-western regions of Nepal and the 2021 September 6th floods of Kathmandu Valley (especially Bhaktapur) had not only damaged billions of properties but also took human life and escalated fear, insecurity and tension in the affected areas.

Forest fires are causing devastation in Nepal and its trend is increasing over time. Thousands of hectares of forests are damaged by forest fires annually and caused worth of billions of damages. Intensity and frequency of forest fires is higher in Sudurpaschim and Madesh Provinces. A recent research findings states *"The 2001-2020 data revealed increasing forest fire incidences. Seasonally, pre-monsoon appeared to have higher frequencies of forest fires. By province, the Tarai and Siwalik regions of the Sudurpaschim Province, Madhesh Province, Lumbini Province, and Bagmati Province are susceptible to fire. In terms of fire risk, the Tarai-Siwalik region of Sudurpaschim and Madhesh Province are at very high forest fire risk. In terms of environmental loss and damage, every year on an average, 3,098 fire incidences occur resulting in damage to 172,040.65 hectares (ha) of forest and biomass loss of 7.07 million tons per year accounting to emission of 3.30 million tons of carbon per year. During 2020-2021 period, a total of Nepalese Rupees (NPR) 1890000 (USD 15240.70) was lost due to the damage incurred by forest fire. Likewise, from 2007 to 2021, 71 human casualties have been recorded. Both natural and anthropogenic factors are responsible for the occurrence of forest fire in Nepal. Thus, for the protection of forests, properties and lives, strict forest fire mitigation policies and practices ensuring sustainable forest fire management is crucial."* (Bhujel et. al, 2022, p. 1).

Refugees

Refugee issue is becoming not only an effective tool for international community to engage in Nepal as per their vested interests but also a highly contested domestic issue

of politics. In the recent years, it even become source of easy income for high profile criminals, which was exposed once an organized crime case against 31 people was invested gated by police and registered to Kathmandu District Court by Kathmandu District Attorney in late May 2023. This case has raised serious concern of national importance as it was related to human trafficking, organized crime, corruption, abuse of authority and so on.

According to UNHCR, Nepal hosts around 20,000 refugees mainly from Tibet, Bhutan and some other states. The large influx of refugees was arrived in Nepal from Tibet in 1959 and Bhutan in 1990-1991. The number of refugees residing in Nepal is not significantly changed in 2021 compared to the previous year (2020). In both year total number remained at around 19.57 thousand.

Health Disease, Epidemics and Pandemics

Frequent appearance and spread of different types of diseases, epidemics and pandemics have caused perennial source of insecurity and tension and ultimately becomes issue of human security and consequently appears as an integral part of national security. Responsible policy makers most consider addressing such issues before becoming problems.

Nasana Bajrachary (in 19 September 2020) nicely documents the 'history of epidemics in Nepal' which was published by onlinekhabar, in the context of unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. She defines pandemic as an outbreak of a disease spreading quickly and affecting a large number of people over multiple countries or continents affecting an even higher portion of the population at the same time. She has stated that the cholera was first recorded in Nepal as an epidemic in 1823 and the largest cholera outbreak was reported in 2009 in Jajarkot with more than 30,000 cases and more than 500 deaths).

Another pandemic Nasana lists is Kala-Azar (a chronic and fatal parasitic disease that attacks internal organs, particularly liver, spleen, bone marrow, and lymph nodes), which was first in the 1960s in the western hilly region of Nepal. A total of 25,890 cases with 599 deaths were reported during the year 1980-2006. Another epidemic she stated was Bubonic Plague (a zoonotic disease), which was first recorded between 1960-1962, in Rupandehi and Mahottari districts with 150 cases and in October 1967 in Bajhang. The fourth epidemic according to her was malaria (a life-threatening disease spread from bite of Anopheles (female) mosquitoes). The first outbreak of malaria was 1974 from Kapilvastu, Rupandehi, and Nawalparasi districts followed by 42,321 cases in 1985 and 29,000 in 1991. Since then, in October 2006 at Banke district with 1,200 cases and 32 deaths, 3,900 cases in 2010 and 585 cases in 2018.

Similarly, the fifth epidemics Nasana stated is Encephalitis (brain swollen) and spread to humans through bites of Culex mosquitoes. Its first outbreak occurred in 1978 in Rupandehi district. Then, it appeared in Sunsari, Morang, and later in all 23 districts of Terai. An outbreak of encephalitis was also reported in Kathmandu valley in In 1997 too. The sixth epidemics she mentioned were measles (an infection caused by the rubella virus) and reported in Nepal from 1994 to 2002, with approximately 90,000 cases per

year.

Other common health related disease-causing human insecurity in Nepal are chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, tuberculosis, ischemic heart disease, lower respiratory infections, cerebrovascular disease, common cold, scrub typhus and pneumonia; whcih are common part of human security concern. Once they are not able to manage properly and results detrimental consequences it becomes national security concern.

Once these diseases create health problem to large number of populations of the country it becomes source of multiple malpractices (corruption, manipulation, and biases in treatment or medication) and ultimately becomes source of social and political tension and insecurity.

Environmental Insecurity

Referring to the Environmental security definition of the Russian Federation, Landholm (1998, p .12) states, "Environmental security is protectedness of natural environment and vital interests of citizen, society, the state from internal and external impacts, adverse processes and trends in development that threaten human health, biodiversity and sustainable functioning of ecosystems, and survival of humankind (Upreti, et.al., 2013, p. 211-212). From this definition it is clear that is protecting natural environment is strategically important to safeguard vital interests of citizen, society and state from adverse impacts on human health, biodiversity and sustainable functioning of ecosystems, and survival of human being.

Climate Insecurity

Many types and varied degree of insecurities arising from climate change are already evident in Nepal. For example, prolonged dry winters and wetter monsoon summers with increased rainfall has created new challenges (e.g., shift in flowering and fruiting time; change length of crop maturity, etc.) in agriculture and that could cause food insecurity in the long run. In the recent past huge population of Nepal is affected by river flooding. These frequent flooding were related to erratic rainfall and said to be the effect of climate change. Mudslides and landslides, shift in agricultural season, glassier melts and alteration in the river systems and food production systems are not only creating livelihood insecurity (obstructing subsistence farming, herding and fishing) and food insecurity but also posing economic stress and becoming a major source of insecurity. All these events a are said to be the adverse effects of climate change. These issues are of great policy concern and must be addressed by policy.

The climate change is not because of developing countries like Nepal. It was the product of industrialization and consumerism of western countries (IPCC, 2021). Hence, they are and they should be responsible for emitting greenhouse gases including carbon dioxide and methane. However, developing countries are suffering more form these climate change effects (DCA, 2021). It is reported that climate change has adverse effects on health and livelihoods of Nepali people. Extreme weather events have caused displacement, increased hunger, altered agriculture practices and exerted pressure on mental health (DCA, 2021). Series of publications of ICIMOD have demonstrated the

potential devastating effects of climate change in Nepal and Hindukush Himalaya region and therefore need urgent polity attention and action.

Food Insecurity

Susceptibility to natural disasters like drought, earthquakes, floods, and landslides, armed conflict and political tension, distortion of food market by monopoly players fluctuation of market prices, poor storage capacity and regulations accelerate food insecurity and even affected more to women and children (Ghale, 2023; 2017). Low productively, lack of agricultural mechanism, poor governance, monopolistic Indian market, wrong subsidy policy and lack of political commitment to advance Nepal's agriculture sector are some of the factors contributing to food insecurity and consequently posing challenge in national security (Upreti et. al., 2023). Further, limited land resources, low productivity, weak storage, processing and distribution facilities, poor access to food in remote areas and civil war have cause food insecurity in Nepal (Upreti et al., 2016). Similarly, rain fed dependent agriculture, low investment in protecting indigenous agriculture (NPC & WFP, 2019).

Food security is potentially a most serious national security concern, if we are not able to change the current pattern of food dependency (Upreti et. al., 2079 BS). According to the data of Department of Customs Nepal had imported agriculture products worth Rs 378.60 billion in 2021/22, and Rs. 323.66 billion in 2020/21. Means every year the import is increasing. For example, we had imported food items of Rs. 55 billion more in 2021/22 than in 2020/21. Our agriculture import is largely from India and such reliance is highly futile in the context of Indian history of series of blockades in the past.

At present our agriculture is not competent with Indian agriculture because of heavy subsidy to Indian farmers. Further, our policy on agriculture is wrong to protect Nepali agriculture. We are totally reliant on hybrid seed and ruined our local seed system. If we are not able to get seed on time, it will not only collapse our agriculture but also impose famine. Hence, Nepal must have agriculture policy that promote and protect Nepali agriculture, prevent ruining of Nepali agriculture products market. It is urgently needed to end the domination of Indian agriculture products in Nepali market, start registration of genetic resources available in Nepal, protect seed and germplasm and get rid of external seed dependency (Upreti, et al., 2079 BS).

Water Insecurity

Though Nepal is rich in water resources, it is facing water scarcity because of combination of poor water management, climate change and a rapidly growing population in urban and peri-urban areas. According to UNICEF, 'every day children dying form preventable diseases caused by poor water, and a lack of sanitation and hygiene. Its state "10.8 million people in Nepal do not have access to improved sanitation, and 3.5 million do not have access to basic water services." Nepal's water and sanitation policy is not able to provide improved and equitable access to safe and sustainable drinking water and sanitation services to all children and their families. It highlights that clean water, basic toilets and good hygiene practices are lacking and contributing to survival and

development of children. Children under five are mainly dying form water- and sanitation-related diseases. Our policies are not able to prevent death of children from preventable diseases caused by poor water, and a lack of sanitation and hygiene. In this context, UNICEF states, "10.8 million people in Nepal do not have access to improved sanitation, and 3.5 million do not have access to basic water services." Hence, this issue is directly related to security of nation.

Policy makers are not able to deal with resilient water system because they do not internalize reasons of water security. In this context, a recent study (Maskey et al., 2023, p1) states, "water security cannot be ensured by only dealing with water inadequacy without building a resilient water system and robust institutions. We found that water scarcity has affected other components of water security such as equity, quality, and affordability".

UN World Water Development Report 2023 has presented worrying future water crisis scenarios if policy makers and planners do not work proactively in a collaborative and concerted way to deal with this issue.

Religious Extremism

International Religious Freedom Report 2022 of the State Department; Christian missionaries target the birthplace of Buddha in Nepal. The currently radicalized debate on Hindu state v/s a secular state and rapidly expanding Christian religion in Nepal is understood by some section of society as sponsored anti Hindu orchestration and growing international interests indicate complexity of the debate and ultimately poses potential security risks if not dealt it properly.

A recent study indicates a divided population based on age on the religious issues. Its state, "the mindsets of most of the elder populations interviewed still want Nepal to be the only Hindu state in the world, whereas the active young-age (youth) population is more inclusive and is happy with the secular nation" (Suvedi, 2021). It is not good to see the country's population to be divided in this way as it poses possible security risks, as religion is highly sensitive and emotional issue.

Synthetic Medicines

Security risks are also coming from development and use of synthetic medicines (for example, of synthetic opioids), which are chemical substances synthesized in a laboratory to use in the brain as natural opioids like morphine and codeine for analgesic or pain relief effects, fifty times more potent than heroin. Often the pharmaceutical industries test such medicines in poor and weak countries and therefore there are always risks of introducing such medicines in Nepal. Hence it can be a future security threat for Nepal and therefore policy makers must proactively work on the policy framework that prevents such malpractices and testing.

Governance Problem

Mal-governance seems widespread in Nepal. State employees, members of institutions, and individuals tasked with carrying out state responsibilities often engage in corrupt,

biased, and negligent behavior. They may refuse to respond to the concerns of those they are supposed to serve, act opaquely, deceive others, commit fraud, implement manipulative policies and practices, cheat, and simply do nothing. Such practices are not only creating deep frustration, hatred and helplessness to right holders, citizens or beneficiaries of services but also ruining relationship between state and people, a strong binding force for stability and national security. Consequently, they raise voice against the government and or state and at the end state-people relations are ruined. This situation is structural causes of national insecurity. Therefore, the responsibility of the state is to improve state people relations by improving service delivery and ginning confidence of general public, which is possible only through good governance. The current situation of Nepal is in the stage of ruined relations between the state and people and therefore proactive policies are urgently needed to address this bad-governance problem to improve state people relations.

Human Right and Justice

Continuous violation of human rights and lack of proactive engagement in addressing pervasive injustice existed in society or new injustice created by the state through biased policies, strategies and action often leads to develop negative feeling in the mind of citizens and consequently they start opposing the state or even revolt against it.

Now human rights violation is an international issue and goes beyond the state boundary. Further, human right is also becoming an effective tool of powerful nation to control internal affairs of human right violating countries. So, respecting human rights of own citizen and addressing issue of injustice is the best way of avoiding to make country a playground of international power centers. Hence, policy makers of country must develop proactive policy framework to address this concern.

Citizenship Issue

Citizenship is a highly sensitive, blatantly contested and foundationally important issue. Therefore, it has to be cautiously dealt with the principle of 'citizenship is only for rightful citizens'.

The present history, citizenship was strategically and tactfully utilized by powerful neighbors to dissolve own nation and to integrate with another nation. Latest example is Sikkim (Datta, 2013). Therefore, policy makers have to be cautious to deal on citizenship issue, thinking beyond their vest political and individual interests. Countries like Nepal must be extra cautious because it has open border with countries having billions of populations. Hence, citizenship issue is a major national security issue to be dealt unanimously, without division of political parties.

Trade Dependency Related Insecurity

Being a landlocked country, Nepal is has no direct connection with sea, even though landlocked countires have right of access to sea. Access of Nepal to sea is not yet pragmatically attractie because it cause delays and transport costs are high.

Further, Nepal has ineffective and inefficient customs and transit transport procedures.

Consequently, being landlocked mountainous country with poor governance and having bureaucratic failure, Nepal is perennially facing serious problems in trade, transportation, and associated issues (Ghimire et al., 2080BS). It is even complicated by political division, earthquake and other natural disasters, poor infrastructure and non-cooperation from India.

It is observed that Nepal has very little export and extremely high import, low quality of products and good, wrong trade policy, high cost of production, complicated bureaucratic administrative procedure, low productivity, weak trade diversification. Even worse is that our neighbour India has imposed blockade four times i.e. 2019 BS, 2027BS, 2045BS (1989), and 2072 BS (23 Sept. 2015) (Pant, 2018).

India imposed blockade in 1970, because Nepal had built the Araniko Highway linking Kathmandu with China and opened Tatopani as a trade route. India became angry and obstructed the movement of goods to Nepal by not extending the expired 1950 Trade and Transit Treaty. Similarly, India imposed the 1989 blockade protesting purchase of Chinese Weapons by Nepal. This blockade was started on April 1989 continued for 15 months with complete restriction of movement of essential commodities such as food products, salt, oil, spices and petroleum products (Pant, 2018). The 1989 blockade was also started once the expiration of the trade and transit treaty.

The blockade imposed by India on 2072 BS (23 September 2015) was expressing dismay immediately after the promulgation of new Constitution on September 20, 2015. In these all blockade, Nepal faced severe difficulties in terms of livelihoods of people, ruined economy and ultimately became the issue of national security. In this context, policy makers of Nepal must work hard to provide conducive policy and legal frameworks that promotes self-reliance and less dependence to India.

Artificial Intelligence

On 28 April 2023, the Economist (a famous magazine) published the assessment of Yuval Noah Harari (popular historian and philosopher of the present time). According to the Economist Harari argues that AI has hacked the operating system of human civilization. Further, he goes saying "storytelling computers will change the course of human history. …Over the past couple of years new AI tools have emerged that threaten the survival of human civilization from an unexpected direction. AI has gained some remarkable abilities to manipulate and generate language, whether with words, sounds or images. AI has thereby hacked the operating system of our civilization".

Even it is feared that AI could be used for malicious purposes, such as cyber-attacks, terrorism, or warfare. AI-powered weapons could be developed that are capable of making autonomous decisions about who to target and how to attack, which could lead to devastating consequences. Possibility of using AI for unintended or harmful ways for strategic gain by some manipulators exist and that could pose serious threat to humanity. AI is new development and still less understood, it is quite difficult to predict all potentials risks. But mindful policy makers can proactively engage in analyzing and updating the AI advancement and prepare the response strategy accordingly.

Cyber Security

In the recent decades, cyber insecurity is becoming a major security threat and therefore demands strong cyber-security capacity to address it. According to the Nepal Centre for Security Governance major cyber securities related issues of are a) identity theft, b) banking frauds, c) hacking, d) cyberbullying, f) online threats & intimidation, g) different forms of online violence against women, h) revenge porn, i) copyrights, j) social media crisis, k) denial-of-service (DoS), l) online child abuses.

Cyber security relates to focus, strategy, processes applied to safeguard and secure assets used to carry information of an organization from being stolen or attacked. Therefore, it requires extensive knowledge of possible threats such as viruses or other malicious objects. Identity management, risk management, and incident management form the crux of the cyber security strategies of an organization. Hence, it is urgent to develop standardization and integrated cyber policy and law that prevents and or minimizes such cyber-crimes.

Unconventional Security as Public Policy Concern: An Analysis

The following is the analytical framework for analyzing potential unconventional security threats as public policy concern for Nepal. Analytical framework helps to organize the arguments and provides the conceptual context to develop path of analysis.

In this section, the analyses of the findings are presented with possible major category of scenarios. The first scenario is: high understanding and commitment of domestic actors (UCDA). The second scenario is: low UDA, low DCC and low EGI. The third one is in-between the first and second scenarios.

Figure 1

Analytical Framework for Unconventional Security Risk in Fluid Policy Context

Domestic Coping Capacity (DCC): Research and analysis, technological advancement, negotiation skills, resources	Understanding and Commitment of Domestic actors (UCDA): Context, content, risks and threats, actors intentions
Unconventional security threats	
External Geo-strategic Interests (EGI): Political, economic, security	Sudden Devastations and Natural Calamities (SDNC)

Note. Designed by Author (2023).

Scenario 1: High UCDA, High DCC and High EGI

The section three demonstrated that different potential unconventional security threats exist and they are great public policy concerns for Nepal. Hence, they have to be dealt through appropriate policy legal interventions by the government, for which proper understanding and full commitment of domestic actors, strong domestic coping capacity, proper research and analysis, use of modern technology, negotiation skills, and financial resources are required.

If key domestic actors are able properly analyze context, content, risks and threats from unconventional security issues, they will engage more proactively to understand and internalize the complexity of unconventional security threats and ultimately expected to their work full commitment. If this happens, country will better prepare to deal with external as well as domestic challenges. They will develop better policy; invest in negotiation and capacity building of negotiators and other state apparatus.

Though, external geo-strategic interests are often beyond our domestic control. However, if Nepal meaningfully engages diplomatically, politically (at different levels such as political parties, government official, military and high-profile authorities like prime minister and president) and socially (at civil society, academic, religious, business community level), it can minimize, neutralizes or shape external geo-strategic interests.

Nepal must develop domestic coping capacity (DCC) to deal with challenges posed by unconventional security. This means we have to strengthen research and analysis, promote e-governance and maximize use of information and technology, develop collective understanding and strategy for connected action. The first and foremost precondition to cope with the security challenges presented in the third section is to create and strengthen research institutions and investing in analysis capacity development of human resources. Strengthening National Security Council (NSC) and developing its Secretariat as a premium think tank. Further, it is equally important to develop capacity of other important institutes like National Defense University, Policy Research Institute, Institute of Foreign Affairs, Water and Energy Commission, think tank institutes of universities and other research organizations to accomplish good quality research and analysis. This capacity will not only help policy and political decision makers in dealing with unconventional security issues but also respond to crisis created by Sudden Devastations and Natural Calamities (SDNC).

This is best case scenario and it is desperately required for Nepal. However, looking to the current attitude of behaviors and actions of majority of bureaucratic and political leaders, it is less likely.

Scenario 2: Low UCDA, Low DCC and Low EGI

In this scenario, the situation is worse and Nepal move toward undesirable direction. In this situation, understanding and commitment of domestic actors (UCDA) like political party leaders, ministers, senior bureaucrats and policy and decision makers about the broader context, contemporary contents of emerging security risks and threats becomes weak, biased or incomplete or incoherent. At this scenario, the key actors are either ignorant or negligent or deliberately manipulate situation for multiple vested interests. In this scenario, intentions and actions of key actors are questionable and criticized by public. In this scenario, domestic coping capacity is weak because of lack of commitment and understanding of key actors. Further, circumstances become favorable for increase activities of external geo-strategic interests in all political, economic, security concerns because of actions and behaviors of key political decision makers. Consequently because of the poor UCDA and EGI, the domestic coping capacity (DCC) on research and analysis, technological development, negotiation skills, resources mobilization as well

as preparedness for response are extremely poor and risk of insecurity in country is high.

In the SDNC scenario, proper handing the natural calamities and disasters situation is not feasible because the key decision makers are not able to cope with sudden devastations and natural calamities like earthquake, floods, landslides and mudslides, glassier melt and avalanches, prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall and their combined effects on security.

Scenario 3: In-Between the First and the Second Situation

In this scenario, situation of understanding and commitment of domestic actors on the present context, unconventional security contents and the associated risks and threats are blurred, actors are confused and assessing their intentions is difficult. It is because of their inconstant behavior, confusing understanding and contradictory actions. Also, level of duality is high (frequently shifting their position either this or that extremes). Key political decision actors themselves show confusing positions and behavior about growing external geo-strategic interests. Hence, they knowingly and or unknowingly oppose and or support EGI in their political, economic, security related decision making. So, in such situation, strengthening and sustaining domestic coping capacity and advancing research and analysis about unconventional security, promoting technologies and enhancing negotiation skills is extremely difficult if not impossible.

In this scenario, coping and or dealing with sudden devastations and natural calamities like earthquake, floods, landslides and mudslides, glassier melt and avalanches, prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall and their combined effects on properly handing situation of SDNC is severely weak.

Conclusions

Nepal is possibly going to face potentially critical unconventional security challenges in foreseeable future if not start proactive strategies. Public policy makers, political leaders and bureaucratic leaders must first properly understand the serious implications of unconventional security in the country and then work concertedly.

Some of the major unconventional security challenges are related to water insecurity, artificial intelligence, bad-governance, spreading epidemics and pandemics, growing food-insecurity, vulnerability form disasters, abuse of information and technology, frequent natural calamities, influx of refugees, growing religious extremism, and many others. Therefore, right public-policy and regulatory framework, full commitment of political leaders and government officials with patriotic attitude, responsive behavior and concerted action are essential to address potential future unconventional security challenges.

Based on the scenario analysis with the use of specific indicators, it is concluded that we are going to the direction of high potential unconventional security risks because of increasing external geo-strategic interests' penetration through political, economic, security spheres.

Nepal's coping capacity is weak because Nepal has not appropriately invested in research and analysis, technological advancement, negotiation skills, and resources mobilizations. It is because of poor or superficial understanding and low commitment of key domestic actors. In such a situation, it is less likely to properly handle the situation of future sudden devastations and natural calamities.

So, it is urgently needed to create environment of strengthening and promoting situation of scenario one presented in the preceding section.

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