

Nepal's National Security in Changing Political Circumstances

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Abstract

This article explores the several security challenges faced by small and landlocked countries which seem to be harmful for peace, prosperity, security and development. Small and landlocked countries, like Nepal, in the world are experiencing different security challenges at present in the backdrop of different political power. The national security in twenty first century is meant for peace, prosperity and economic progress and development. In the changing dynamics of Nepal, especially after the promulgation of the Constitution in 2015, the security issue has been a major concern for political stability and international relations. Though the security issue has a very long history, since the beginning of human civilization it was important, its goal is not ended yet. Nonetheless, the internal and external dynamics of national security have been shifted in the changing contexts of regional, and global political power. It has diverse sensitivity in different circumstances of political regime. The classical agro-based state-constructed security is relocated into human-centric notion for peace, stability and development. Contrary the small and landlocked states are always in threat in different ways which is undoubtedly different things to different people. The sense of national security in the academia involves mitigation of physical threat and psychological fear. As a result, the cherished values collapsed and affect the conditions of peace, stability and development.

Keywords: security, small and landlocked states, paradigm shift, globalization, political order, peace, stability, development

Introduction

Security of state and survival of people are interrelated. Nonetheless, they are not synonymous. Security of any state is a part of political independence whereas survival is meant for existence of human beings without any possible threat and fear. Paul D. Williams (2013) states that the security matter is incredible to understand the perception of world politics without referencing to the actual context of each country. The perception of security concern involves interpreting the previous events, understanding the present concern of nation state, and trying to link it with the future aspect of the country. In the field of academia, as Booth (2007) opines that it pursuits for realizing security for the real people in real context. These issues are the most sensitive concern for every individual, society and the states. Security is considered as a potent political instrument for promoting priority issues in the struggle for government attention. The perception of security is perceived to a political-card that needs the allocation of sufficient human and financial go through the literatures on this field, in general the prevailing literature emphasizes on pragmatic part of the existing security issues that focus to evaluate the external and martial policies of state (Wagle, 2010). Unlike this, the overall trait of security study is perceived as an area of inquiry to understand the fundamental questions. Buzan and Hansen (2009) have opined that the primary and chief effort of it is to establish a logical connection

about how global security is studied to be familiar with the changing context of dynamics. Particularly the central concern of it is to understand the five major issues are as: great power politics, technology, key events, the internal dynamics of academic debates, and resource allocation. As this, it deals with the concept of military centric approach (Williams, 2013). The golden age in this sector is considered the period from 1950s and 1960s, and the civilians had a reputation for being knowledgeable about military strategy and had a good relationship with Western governments and their foreign and security policy (Garnett 1970 & Freedman 1998).

In the Cold War period, Williams (2013) writes the dominant approach in security studies had advocated the political realism with the four 'S' like states, strategy, science and the status quo. Subsequently with the fall of the political system of Soviet Union in 1990s, the concept of security is meant for becoming free from fear and to live with happiness. The substantial decline in inter-state conflict as Bhattarai (2010) stated has prominently contributed in the decrease of conventional security fear. Buzan (1991) and Ullman (1983) have argued that security sector was centered on human collectiveness. In line with this, Buzan (1991) opined that human collectiveness was basically affected by martial security, political security, financial security, social security and environmental security. The particular formation of the general interest exemplified in the UN's National Security Act of 1947. Some academicians have categorically argued that priority is for giving to citizens. Otherwise, security makes no sense for common civilians (McSweeney,1999). Security is a concern of human dignity, justice and freedom of fear, but not a part of weapons (Haq,1995). However, the defense of sovereignty, national uprightness, political freedom, human safety and freedom are fundamental internal security concerns of every state. Contemporary notion of security is human-cent based approach rather than state-centric idea of security matter. The view of Mantoo (2016, p. 68) is human centric collectiveness and people wish to be free from a variety of political and economic issues, including civil conflict, illiteracy, starvation, child labor, drug trafficking, etc.

During Rana regime, Nepal was in a close political system. Earlier, the King of Himalayan State, Prithivi Narayan Shah had stated that Nepal is yam between two boulders. It clearly indicates Nepal is a small landlocked country between India and China. As for this, Nepal was in a security threat and had faced many internal and external security challenges. However, Tiwari (1989) stated that the influence of British colony could not affect the independence of Nepal in contemporary Asia. During the cold war time, Pakistan got split into two facts, Sikkim was annexed into India; and the King Birendra purposed Nepal as the zone of peace in 1973 summit of Non Aligned Movement (Anand, 1977) to mitigate the challenges of external security concern. Israel-Palestine Fighting, Gulf War, Iran-Iraq Warfare, Vietnam War, War in Korean region, etc. were the examples of small states threatened by big regional and global power. There was rivalry between democratic and non-democratic blocs as the USA and the USSR backed the countries in the global level. Similarly, the tussle between India and Pakistan was continuous since long; and such security threats from external forces made the countries of Third world bloc persecute for political power play (Khanal, 2010). The prime objective of this article is to explore the external and internal security challenges of small and landlocked states like Nepal. It aims to highlighting the various security concerns after post-cold war period. It follows the descriptive and analytical perspectives to fulfill the objectives of this research article. This qualitative research focuses on the availability of the secondary data to explore and establish the ideas.

Theoretical Framework of Security

There are different theoretical approaches to security studies. Among them classical realism, neorealism, neoclassical, offensive, and defensive structural realism are prominent theories (Elman and Jensen, 2013) to understand the issues of Nepal's national security in changing circumstance have connection with the realistic theory of security system. In addition, there are some theoretical modalities as liberalism, game theory, constructivism, peace theory, critical theory, feminist theory, etc. to understand the internal and external security system of the state. To Bilgin (2013), the critical theory draws the ideas of Gramsci and Frankfurt School to look for emancipatory security system. As in the classical time, even at present the security theory deals with agreement for collective activities and sovereignty of state. The security for the state and people is the major issue in the twenty first century. The desire of the safety is for the sake of protecting humanity, human values, and respecting the territory of the country. The first category of safety is protecting life, freedom and the happiness of the people. People want to be free from all sort of fear in order to feel safe and remain happiness. It should discourage the inter-state war, weapon competition, increasing crimes due to internal factors. Picarelli has pointed out the growing international systematized criminal action including illegal trade of drugs, trafficking and arms are the common security threats in modern time (2012, 453-457).

Bilgin (2013) says that since long common people were expecting for practicing the security. Understanding national security initiatives necessitates a study of political dynamics between the two nations (Pasha 1996, Abraham 1998). As this, the external security concern of Nepal is to begin its own political process to unite the people for security and development. Booth (1991) has stated that rethinking of security as emancipation of safety system is a part of critical security theory in security studies. The prominent thinker Gramsci (1891–1937) particularly has drawn a line between critical and problem-solving theories. In line with this, the common approach of critical theory engages with problems not losing the historical processes which might be the best way to transform the existing order of security studies. Wyn Jones (1999), a follower of Frankfurt school of critical theory states critical security theory comes with the appropriate solution that goes beyond the problem-solving within the framework of present political system.

Security Threats for Small and Landlocked Country

Nepal is a small and landlocked country. It is small due to its geography, demography and GNP. East (1975) and Olafsson (1998) have argue that the small states have small population, area and GNP. According to Rothstein, the definition of small state is:

A small power is a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by using its own capabilities and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so; the Small Power's belief in its inability to rely on its own means must also be recognized by other states involved in international politics. (Rothstein cited in Keohane, 1968, p. 293).

Nepal experienced political movement in different time. The constitution of Nepal in Article (3) states that Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-cultural country. It has diverse geographical regions, and all Nepali people collectively constitute the nation. The Constitution of 2015 is a paradigm shift in Nepalese political history. In addition Article (3) (a) (5) accepts of strengthening national security system by making the army, police, armed police

and other security organs strong, capable, professional, inclusive and accountable to people. Nepal now faces a number of security issues, including identity politics, extremism, corruption, serving as a transit point for illegal drugs, an upsurge in violent crime and a culture of lawlessness, human trafficking, etc.

Adhikari (2018) views –"Nepal had followed strategies of ‘special relationship’ with its neighbors, non-alignment, balancing, balking, neutrality, equidistance, equi-proximity and trilateral cooperation depending upon changes in domestic, and regional as well as international politics" (43). The political change of the 1951 dethroned the Rana regime, the political movement of 1990 constitutionalized the monarchy, and the political insurgency of 1996 to 2006 along with the movement of 2006 transformed the centralized monarchical system into a republic, federal and inclusive political system. All the time, the security concern has been the fundamental concept at national, regional and global levels in the age of economic globalization. The regional, global and super power countries want to establish hegemony in regional and global level. As this, Nepal located between two big in terms of population and territory wants to play a dynamic role in regional and global level. Upreti (2012) points out that as Nepal is located in a geo-strategically complex position between China and India, Nepal's security is in sensitive position. Rajan (2016) states that the independent country since its history Nepal has established a balanced relationship with its immediate neighboring countries, and never pauses to accept the required proposal from China and India. These two giant countries have their own prime concern and they are contesting for regional issues and standing in opposite polarization in regional and global politics. The question of security of Nepal before and after 1990 fundamentally changed. Even after the political shift after 2006 –the international community had supported to accept the role of UN to initiate the peace process that had ended the political movement of Maoist insurgency. Nepal practiced the inclusive democratic system, and still the country is vulnerable in the global system. The small and landlocked country has some degree of threats in internal and external cases. Nepal is facing internal security in different levels. Due to high resources of water, it has some offs and down relation with India. It has brought some problems in internal security as well as external security challenges.

The geopolitical revelry between Sino-Indian is in up and down mood. The Dalai Lama-India relations and Nepal-Tibet refuge case is one sort of problem for Nepal since Nepal believes in one China policy. Similarly, India feels the Pakistan-China-Nepal relations is always the threat to India for its peace and security. The influence of China in South Asia including in Sri Lanka, Maldives Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan through the belt and road initiative has been a problem for regional power India, global and super power of modern era. India's security concern is gradually increasing as India got independence in 1947 AD and got suspected with the independence of China in 1949. It led to sign on India and Nepal friendship treaty in 1950. Bhasin (2005) explores that Jawaharlal Nehru had the desire to establish the special relationship with Nepal due to the security concern of Nepal from other side. It made "India-Nepal relationship as unique but not stable" (Rajan, 2016, 2) and even at present this concept is powerful in Nepali people's mind. Nepali people has the fear of such psychology with the Indian political establishment, and here the idea of Bilgin (2013) portrays the same as the Variances "in understanding security and defining threats partly derive from but cannot be reduced to the psychological process of mis/perception" (95). Ultimately, Nepali society wants to be free from fear of life-determining constraints of unstable relationship between India and Nepal. The

agenda of Peace proposal, promoted by the then King Birendra as Nepal's international policy in Panchayat political system in February 1975, as 'a Zone of Peace' (ZOP) which was ratified by China, US, and the Soviet Union. However, India never welcomed the ZOP. Sharma (2004) quotes as the King had stated the ZOP as Nepal being the descendants of one of Asia's oldest civilizations, Nepal has a natural desire to protect the heritage and history for the independence of the country. The peace is necessary for the historic independence of the country.

Rajan (2016) observes that India as a powerful country exploits Nepal's natural resources for its advantage and the trans-boundary river water treaties are not activated due to political instability. Now, it has been a problems in Nepal's foreign relation. The Mahakali treaty, approved by Nepalese parliament 1998 has no progress since long. Similarly, the Indo-Pacific agenda of the United States can be a security concern to China. It has brought a rift in Nepal's political parties. As other small states, Nepal has experienced the political instability. Nepal ruled by Rana regime for 104 years, Panchyat regime for 30 years, and political insurgency for 10 years threatened for the political stability. Though Nepal remained sovereign in its history, it has felt domination by regional power in different ways. The political elites, absence of good governance, lack of rule of law, injustice, exclusiveness, etc., are political problem for peace and security (Khanal: 2010). There is structure of big and small powers and such constructivists create a debate from structural variables and limitations. The big political power threats the small states to undermine them in different ways and bypass the roles they employ in political arena. However, according to Keohane (1969), the small states are those whose leaders believe they are completely unable to make any meaningful changes to the system that might enhance the democratic system. In this grim situation, as Wyn Jones writes technology has opened up "a range of options or choices for society, and the options chosen depend in part on the configuration of power relationships within that society and almost invariably serve to reinforce the position of the hegemonic group" (1999: 139).

Changing Context of Nepal

Political shift, cultural affinity, economic development, environmental issue, migration, sense of nationalism, etc. have pushed the politics of Nepal into a new point. Alker (2005) has urged the post-hegemonic linking of culturally sensitive ideas of emancipation with equally culturally sensitive, empirically testable conceptions of existential security. However, Nepal is not in the same position as it was in the past. Politics of twenty first century has made new provision for security concern of this time as the two rivalry super powers are ended after 1990. After the declaration of new Constitution of Nepal in 2015, many unsettled issues remained since 1951 have been changed. The sense of nationalism based on ethnic view can appear and reappear in small state like Nepal might be security challenge for the development and the existence of the nation. Similarly, rise of fundamentalist in religion, culture, though Nepal has some cultural affinity with India and China, language and caste-based politics has been a new challenge for the internal security issue of Nepal. Nepal should be free from the ethno-political perspective to maintain its security system. As Mingst (2004) has observed that the ethno-nationalist activities can pose a challenge to domestic sovereignty and political stability in the international system. The small states who were the members of non-aligned movement economically poor, and they have problems of unemployment, trade deficit, poor health service, lack of skilled human resources, and poor performance of technology.

The degradation of rivers' bottom level has increased environmental problem in Nepal. This Himalayan country has the problem of global warming, rapid urbanization, deforestation, landslide, famine, etc. are the possible threat to internal security system of Nepal. As a result, mobility of people from high points to low region and rural area to urban areas have caused many problems like trafficking, prostitution, national and transnational drug trafficking and infected diseases (Mantoo, 2016). They are the common threat for sustainable peace, political stability and economic development of Nepal. With political paradigm shift, Nepal should move ahead in regional and global political forum in a balanced way. The geographical location of Nepal is in good and strategic position to India and China. Even the global power and the countries of other continents can use this region for their own benefit. This geographical position can be both boon and problems for the country. As the Switzerland and Austria are small and landlocked countries, they have proved that peace and stability might be possible for the national development. Rodamon (2018) has observes that re-thinking concept of power is unavoidably concept to the discussion of small states. The sense of globalization has brought many possible threat in their tradition, culture, religion and aboriginal rights of people.

The security problem ultimately brings problem in aspect of human security which is the common threat for national security in broader sense. The pillars of human security are the development paradigm of each country. Haq (1995) states that the growth and development are the exclusive explanation of human choice linked to income, social, cultural and political development of the country. They are common things for strengthening the security of the country. The degradation of human and state security challenges the national security. If it is preserved by the state; and if the people become free from all sorts of fear, that state whether it is big in size or not becomes good for national security aspect. Management of national security in federal political system is a challenging task. Upreti (2012) enlists the basic components of the state security as- the state should focus for the protection of strategically needy areas, assurance of national security to all the people, sovereign and territorial integrity, protection of dignitaries of the state, control of border areas focusing for security perspective, protection of state and people from any invasion, protection of people from natural calamities and diseases.

Conclusion

Practice of inclusive democracy, respect for human right, protection of human dignity, political empowerment, justice for all, etc. are supportive for national security. The critical theory anchorage unites the security system seriously in the deconstructive and reconstructive ways. Security matters with broader perspective. It is the part of people's security, and state security from any sort of internal and external forces. The security issues in Nepal ensure with different components. The Part 5 of present Constitution of Nepal matters with the National Security Council. This constitutional body comprises of the Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Minister for Home, and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Finance, Chief Secretary of Government of Nepal the Commander-in-Chief of Nepal. They collaborate with the stakeholders at federal, provincial and local levels to manage the security system of Nepal.

In twenty first century, the global economic and strategic power is shifted from Atlantic to Pacific region. The Indian Ocean has been the strategic point of the US and the super power is interested to look for the strategic partners for Indo-Asia Strategic collaboration. Nepal being

located between China and India has to deal with the most influential regional powers China and India. Due to the geo-political interests of western countries, Nepal should engage with the regional and global tussle. After 1947, the position of India and Pakistan is not solved, but these countries are attached with the different power centers in regional and global politics.

The notion of security is ancient and emerged with human civilization. After 1990, the security concern had mattered with previous golden period that people had felt after 60s. With the beginning of the twenty first century, the gradual shift power from Atlantic region to Pacific region had converted to Nepal into the challenging position for peace, stability and development. With the balance political power in global and regional forum, Nepal would achieve new things. It would be a new paradigm shift in peace and development of Nepal. Creating the favorable environment for developing relevant policy and strategies would be good for addressing the security threats at twenty first century. Thus, Nepal should go ahead from its traditional security concept to new critical concept that seeks the emancipation from the classical approaches of security perspective. The abandon use of water resources, implementation of pro-people tourism, environmental protection, working for global warming, alleviating poverty, protection of human security, making the people free from fear in order to keep them happy would be common agenda for peace, security, stability and development of Nepal.

The balanced foreign relation with China, and India in regional and maintaining good relationship with the US and European countries would be new agenda to ensure the security system of Nepal. Inclusive democracy, human rights, political empowerment to needy group, etc. are important things for the internal factors of national security. Security is at present a precondition for economic growth, foreign investment, social and political stability, and sustainable development. Thus, all political threats including internal and external threats in security system can be addressed by the strong political government. Then, the Himalayan country Nepal can be shifted from agro-based nationalistic vision to modern people-centric state that only works for peace, stability and development.

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