



A Holistic Approach to National Security Strategy in Nepal: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

Geopolitical and strategic compulsions have posed critical challenges to the national security of Nepal. To safeguard its sovereignty, independence, indivisibility, and international credibility, the slogan of 'nation first' must be adopted in the country. We need to strengthen nationalism by reinforcing economic, political, social, cultural, moral, and psychological facets. To repair the damages, we need to devise a process carefully wherein the state actors and non-state actors from formal and informal sectors have a joint coordinated action plan to develop the entire nation as a whole. This research will analyze such socio-political, behavioral, and economic variables, which will assist in finding the gaps in the current system leading to the formulation of an appropriate conceptual approach to strengthening national security strategies. This study applies the qualitative research design and aims to explore the political dynamics in Nepal with an interpretative approach. To substantiate the claims, the researcher uses primary and secondary data from multiple sources. The essence of the subject matter provides a wider domain for future researchers to explore more about this area of study.

KEYWORDS: National security, national development system, national service, citizenship building, state-building, state sponsorship

INTRODUCTION

King Prithvi Narayan Shah inherited the state of Gorkha in 1742 and initiated the unification campaign. The campaign was wholeheartedly supported by all his subjects. Strategically, the unification campaign was not only to expand the state of Gorkha but also to motivate and consolidate militarily to strengthen national security foundations and repel British colonialism in a holistic approach. Under his leadership, Nepal set a course and directions that largely remained constant until the end of the Rana regime in 1951 (Baidhya, et al., 2001).

In the past, national security was conceived as protection against military aggression, but today inclusion of non-military dimensions has made it more significant.

It has to remain accountable for the protection of the lives and safety of the people. They include maintenance of national sovereignty with its values; preservation of national institutions and its territory; promotion of progress and prosperity of the citizens; and lastly, enhancement of national credibility, and influence on the international stage.

However, after the advent of the multiparty system in 1990, the Nepali helm of political power remained divisive, unstable, and incompetent in governance and thereby exposed to exploitation by external powers. 52 different cabinets assumed power within 30 years. Now, almost all government institutions have been politicized and unionized while national interests have been neglected, exposed, and compromised discreetly under external pressures (Silwal, 2021. pp. 74-76). The political leadership and the organs of governance seem irresponsible towards its sovereign existence. Thus, the country is reeling in political chaos due to the shortage of an astute statesmen. Should the situation deteriorate further due to the incompetent leadership, an alternative approach should be prepared with the capability and support to step in preemptively to activate damage control measures.

A nation needs its citizens as volunteers to toil, develop and progress. The unity among the citizens automatically promotes national security. Thus, there is a need for a restorative and dynamic change concerning the notion of state-building and national development. Hence, as a cumulative and urgent national security response, a holistic approach campaign must be devised. The citizens must be motivated and mobilized to protect sovereignty, independence, national interests, and territorial integrity as an obligation. In turn, citizens should be guaranteed socio-economic and welfare needs by the government. The legislative, judiciary, and bureaucracy backed up by the various security apparatus should function with accountability to serve the people and safeguard the nation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study begins with a brief account of the national security status followed by some measuring variables of national security challenges. Furthermore, it explores the impact of external interferences on human security and our national image in the international arena. This research has identified the security-related lapses and vulnerabilities that logically envisaged the provision of the holistic approach to mitigating external interferences and interventions.

During the cold war era especially in the early 1960s, China was threatened through its soft under-belly Tibet while Dalai Lama was fighting against the communist invasion of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Khampa guerillas raised armed against the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States of America (USA) along with the Revolutionary Analysis Wing (RAW) of India were conducting covert and clandestine intelligence operations across Nepal (Basnet, 2022). For their vested interests, Nepali sovereignty was infringed upon by foreign intelligence services. The political transformation from a unitary Hindu kingdom to a federal and secular republic exposes some vulnerabilities in national security and national unity which need serious attention (Jha, 2014).

The status of Nepali sovereignty was maintained not only by the battles fought by our forefathers from Kangra to Makwanpur (1814-16) but also in the Flanders in 1917 and the jungle of Burma in 1944 (Rana, 2017). Unlike today's Nepali crusade, the Rana regime somehow was exemplary in maintaining national stability and safeguarding Nepali sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. During their oligarchic tenure, they arranged hunting trips and offered diplomatic support to contain immediate threats via subtle appeasement but the course did not persist afterward. Moreover, the

advent of democracy has always marginalized Nepali sovereignty successively. The latter end of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal depicted the consequences of state failures, and the loss of international credibility in the national security affairs of Nepal (Thapa, 2017).

MI6 (British intelligence agency) undermined Nepali sovereignty during the Maoist insurgency and carried out various covert activities detrimental to the national security of Nepal (Bell, 2009). Political dismay then revealed the essence of an effective counter-intelligence agency to monitor and safeguard national security affairs augmented by a holistic approach. A private account of Lt. Gen. (Retd) Bibek Kumar Shah, the former Principal Military Secretary to King Gyanendra disclosed a few controversies surrounding the royal massacre and the involvement of the Indian government in training Maoist guerrillas during the insurgency (Shah, 2017). He claimed that the royal massacre unfolded as a result of a political conspiracy.

Nepal has vividly re-counted facts about Nepali security forces failing to deal with very delicate and sensitive issues. The surreptitious activities conducted in Nepal discreetly by our immediate neighbors to compromise our national sovereignty during the prolonged turbulent political transition are aspects a security expert needs to be cognizant of. The political leadership and the organs of governance seem irresponsible towards the nation's image, international credibility, and its sovereign and independent existence (Silwal, 2021).

Besides geopolitical compulsions, the decline in economy and politics as well as the irrational behavior of the regional power has posed a critical challenge to the national security of Nepal. Hence, as a cumulative and urgent national security response, a holistic campaign must be initiated. A very few scholars have envisaged a holistic approach to mitigating external interferences and interventions. Available literature and pertinent political theorists so far have not able to streamline the security gaps and deficiencies from a national security standpoint. Thus, the researcher aims to identify the security-related lapses and vulnerabilities and logically forwarded appropriate recommendations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study has adopted the qualitative research method, using a descriptive-analytical approach. The collected data are based on the various available literature, personal experiences, documented facts, and answers provided by the selected experts and respondents. Numerous related periodicals and articles regarding national security and new approaches to national unity have been explored during the study.

The open-ended questionnaires were used to measure and monitor specific responses as well as give respondents opportunities to express differing opinions on national security affairs. This arrangement was done to explore public views on threats to our national security. In-depth interviews were also conducted with pertinent historians and various authorities serving in the National Security Council. The focus group discussion for military officers from many different military backgrounds was carefully conducted to express their opinions on a viable and sustainable approach to strengthening national security foundations. Some military officers serving in National Cadet Corps (NCC) were also interviewed during the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Geo-Political Complexity

Due to Nepal's strategic location between China and India, it always remains a buffer state which is a principal challenge to the national security of Nepal. Buffer states

are always maintained as a remote and underdeveloped land strip to prevent the stronger the weaker nation from encroaching on their sphere of influence. Although Nepal remains a sovereign and independent nation and an active member state of the United Nations (UN) and nonalignment, it is struggling with geopolitical complexities.

The British-India hangover continued even after the independence of India in 1947. Nehru's doctrine adopted the strategy to maintain the Himalayan frontier under its domain. India feels that the economic supply line of Nepal is well within its control and socio-cultural ties facilitate to impose of its domination. India aims to reduce it to a protectorate status or if not, to control its foreign, defense, and economic policies whereas China seems more dismayed about Nepali political uncertainty, fading norms of liberal democracy, and possible penetration of external forces into Nepal. The most inhumane accounts of the self-immolation committed by Tibetan monks successively in Nepal had upturned doubts about the internal security management of Nepal. Thus, pulls and pressures for strategic power rivalry and threats to their national security are shaping Nepal as a strategic playground (Khanal, 2016, pp. 305-309).

Furthermore, after the constitutional assembly of 2008, Nepali political leaders are losing political direction and confidence. The fastest-growing military might of China and global economic emergence are becoming principal challenges to maintaining the world order. Nonetheless, our immediate neighbors, both India and China, lost their confidence in Nepali leaders and their credibility, once again after Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact was endorsed by the parliament. In reality, any attempt to interplay India and China would surpass the diplomatic threshold. Lacking a strategy to manage emerging geopolitical trends could lead to detrimental misfortune for safeguarding Nepali sovereignty and independence (Baral, 2012, pp. 189-196).

Democracy Deficit for the National Security of Nepal

With the excuse of establishing democracy after 1990 in Nepal, India has numerously incited the Nepali people to wage proxy wars to dictate its interests secretly. The Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950, outright control of water resources, rampant border encroachments of Nepali territory, and the overt interferences in the political, bureaucratic governance, and security agencies are the manifestations. In a democratic course, the ultimate guardian of national security, the Nepali Army (NA) was also put under United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Baral, 2012, p. 227). Subsequently, foreign intelligence agencies are operating in Nepal overtly and interfering in governance, influencing policy decisions and stipulating their vested interests with various lucrative enticements while responsible political leadership and the bureaucracy remain servile and mute spectators.

Democratic dearth is fetching more security magnitude while Nepal has permitted Indian Army pension camps that function as satellite observation posts in 25 districts with ten more in the pipeline. India is mysteriously permitted to directly invest in its chosen development projects in Nepal. The Western nations are operating various International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) to undermine and ridicule Nepali legitimate governance, culture, and religion. Monasteries in Kathmandu and northern Nepal are being constructed and renovated rampantly by the Western nations and India in tandem under the pretext of preserving Buddhism, but in reality, to covertly maintain surveillance activities. Thus, Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, is becoming a mesh of intruders (Bell, 2014, p. 359).

The Political and Diplomatic Fault Lines

India always fears Chinese military invasion through Nepal and fully banks on the western alliance. It aspires to maintain the whole of the Himalayan watershed range as its border with China. India also wants to reduce Nepal as its protectorate like Bhutan. For this very purpose, under the pretext of promoting democracy in Nepal, India has managed to motivate, groom, assist and facilitate Nepali ambitious pseudo-leaders to wage armed insurrections against the Nepali establishment which Nepal considers detrimental to its national security (Rana, 2017).

After the Republic of India was established, the Indian establishment maintained the British colonial mindset and interfered in the neighboring smaller nations, and even usurped powers forcefully (Datta-Ray, 1984). India launched its first insurrection in Nepal to covertly force the outgoing Rana regime and signed the 1950 treaty that sabotaged the sovereign aspirations and dignified existence. Twenty military check posts were manned by Indian troops along the Sino-Nepal border. It plotted to maintain control over the bureaucracy and control the waters of the Koshi and Gandaki rivers. This was an outright infringement to delegitimize and sabotage national security affairs. However, unlike others, then King Mahendra managed to reassert Nepali sovereign rights, exercise independent foreign and defense policies, evict the military check posts and military training team, reassert bureaucratic control, and strictly prohibited the use of Indian currency (Devkota, 1980).

Political Upheavals, Polarization, and Reversals

In 1989, India considered the ruling monarch as an impediment to converting Nepal into its protectorate like Bhutan. A 13-month long economic blockade was imposed to incite people to abolish the monarchy. In 1990, Indian political leaders master-minded a plot in Kathmandu to provoke, motivate, support, and compel the Nepali Congress Party and the Communist factions to wage a revolution to achieve democracy. In addition, structured a mass demonstration that was later termed a revolution to abolish the monarchy. However, King Birendra skillfully negotiated with the political leaders while refusing the entry of Indian intermediaries, formed an interim government, and an interim constitution, and promulgated a new constitution. Nepali initiatives to assert their sovereignty and independence have been countered by the imposition of several economic blockades (Rathour, personal communication, Dec 26, 2021).

In 1996, India initiated and supported the Maoists People's War to culminate as a proxy war for India to step in. The insurgency was covertly executed under the pretext of uplifting and empowering the rural masses and they rose in arms. Ultimately, insurgency ravaged the nation and destroyed infrastructure. Over 17,000 lives were lost. Malice infested twelve-point agreement was agreed upon and then signed between the Nepalese leaders and the Maoists but marginalized the monarch without public deliberation at the behest of foreign interests especially India (Thapa, 2011).

Meanwhile, the UN entered the peace process, and the western powers while assisting to frame the new constitution declared secularism, federalism, and republicanism. A second Constituent Assembly finally managed to promulgate the Constitution which has destroyed the socio-cultural and religious fabric and antagonized the immediate neighboring powers causing perennial instability. Thenceforth external forces in the guise of establishing democracy have created numerous political upheavals to destabilize the internal socio-political issues of Nepal (Bhatta, 2016).

Our political elites and ruling regimes often come across dilemmas, especially after 1996. Heightened corruption culture in the political sphere and their power hunger

outlook have been badly exploited by the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN Maoist). A classic example of the dilemma is, when Maoists attacked the cadre of the Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist-Leninists (CPN-UML) believed Maoists are their comrades. After sometimes Maoists started assaulting the CPN-UML cadre, NC considered it's no problem. Elusively Maoists remained quiet about the Royal regime the Palace thought they are just attacking NC and UML (KC, 2016). This type of security dilemma faints our obligations to protect core values and safeguard national interests.

Afterward, almost all the government institutions have been severely politicized, the judiciary is manned by party-appointed judges, and the body of the lawyer's association (Nepal BAR) is controlled by political parties and media. Civil society activists are politically aligned, members of constitutional bodies are appointed according to party quotas, non-government organizations (NGOs) and international non-government organizations (INGOs) have released workforces in various ministries to dictate their terms and conditions and the party-appointed diplomats are ignorant of the code to diplomacy. Taking advantage of the situation, foreign intelligence agencies are overtly playing their games without fear of retribution (Adhikari, 2002).

Frail Safety of the Citizens

Encroachment of territories is rampant and ongoing as Nepali people overnight find themselves living in India. Many Nepali citizens, mostly Muslims, have been gunned down frequently by anonymous assailants inspired by a foreign power while the administration has remained mute spectators towards the crimes committed. The administration seems to be aware of the assailants but has refused to declare the truth and prosecute the criminals. It has utterly failed to protect its citizens and take proactive measures to prevent the recurrence of such crimes (Adhikari, 2012).

In 1998, Mirza Dilshad Beg, a parliamentarian (three-time minister), was shot dead around 9:30 pm in his compound in Siphel, Kathmandu. The investigation conducted by Nepal Police disclosed that Mirza was an apprentice of the Indian mafia, Dawood Ibrahim, who was suspected of smuggling drugs and arms into India as well as providing asylum to his agents. A subaltern of Chota Rajan, another mafia leader but a rival of Dawood Ibrahim, was framed as the man behind the plot (Adhikari, 2012).

On 7 February 2010, Nepali media tycoon, Jamim Shah, was shot dead by two sharpshooters in the heart of the capital in broad daylight. It was later stated that two notorious underworlds don, Bhagwat Singh and Bharat Nepali took responsibility for the murder, and a warning that anyone who stands against India would meet the same fate was discreetly avowed. Later, Nepal Police stated that an unnamed subordinate of Chota Rajan operating from Bangkok, have killed Bharat Nepali (self-proclaimed assailant of Jamim Shah). Three former Nepal Police officers including a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) were found to be involved in supporting the assistants but no arrests have yet taken place (Adhikari, 2012).

Later, Faizaan Ahmad, the General Secretary of the Nepali Islamic Association, was murdered two hundred yards north of the Regional Police HQ in Kathmandu. Subsequently, Younus Ansari, the Chairman of National Television, was tipped off by the Indian Embassy as a counterfeit currency dealer and jailed by Nepal Police with meager evidence. As the Nepal Police officials were interrogating Ansari in the Central Jail without approval from higher authorities, an unknown appeared from nowhere and shot at Ansari but missed the target. The shooter was arrested but, freed shortly after (Adhikari, 2012).

The important point is that the rulers of Nepal used the Nepali Muslims to seek information about crime and political fugitives living across the border in India. While prominent Nepali Muslims, who are loyal citizens of Nepal, have been targeted in an unrestrained manner from across the border the Nepal Police hierarchy is suspected of being in the league of the crime. Foreign security agencies take advantage of the open border and kill or arrest Nepali citizens overtly and clandestinely. Thus, the loyalty and patriotism of these threatened citizens towards their motherland are offended.

Royal Massacre: Conspiracy

The infamous Royal Massacre occurred on Friday, 01 June 2001, in Narayanhiti Palace amidst a royal family gathering. Crown Prince Dipendra was claimed to have committed suicide after having shot the King, Queen, and five other family members in a short space of temper. It was the result of a family feud over a forbidden romance that resulted in a regicide. The Nepali people were shocked to lose their savior and guardian amidst political instability. This carnage had raised many questions over the credibility of the ultimate custodian of national security as well (Shah, 2014).

The institution of monarchy was always revered as the ultimate protector and defender of Nepal, a symbol of national unity and the fountain of justice. Yet the rumor mill circulated the suspicion that because the monarch was considered an anti-Indian and pro-Chinese institution while the west considered it the resister to unwanted campaigning it fell prey to a sinister plot devised by unknown subjects.

Foreign Intrusions: Gaur Massacre

A deadly clash between the cadres of Madheshi Rashtriya Mukti Morcha (MRMM) aligned with the Maoists and Madheshi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) occurred in Gaur when the rival groups attempted to stage their rally in the same spot. The incognito MPRF cadres armed with sophisticated weapons from across the border killed 29 and injured several dozen Maoist cadres and fled back to India (Siddhi, 2007). It was a premeditated plot orchestrated by the foreign prowlers to teach the Maoists to fully comply with the Indian instructions. Hence, it was the state's responsibility to protect its citizens, no matter who they were: Maoist or Madhesi, Hindu or Muslim but were the Citizens of our Country (Shah, personal communication, April 4, 2022).

MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF NEPAL

There are a few major weaknesses in Nepal that not only jeopardize its national security but are left open and exposed for external forces to exploit. Unless these weaknesses are eliminated, the nation will remain threatened. Thus, the main discussions of this study are as follows.

Unpredictability

Never-ending political struggle astride the growth of civil societies based on the power of kinship has created a trend of only focusing on vested political actions. The right man is not appointed to the right job. In addition, the practice has resulted in creating ambiguity among youths along with various social problems. The growth of citizenship is becoming very weak in its functionality which in turn is a detrimental factor for national security and development. Such situations have driven youths to either remittance earning sprees abroad, or anti-social movements with no civic sense. Therefore, political instability is the principal challenge to the national security of Nepal

NGO/INGOs Predicament

As the traditional service programs seem to be fading away, the various existing NGOs/INGOs and state-sponsored service programs have not been able to instill the sense of oneness, patriotism, attributes of a model citizen, and the responsibility of developing the nation among the enthusiastic youths. Moreover, the government has no programs at hand to mobilize the youths in a holistic approach for national developmental purposes. The youths have been only used for political lobbying and rallying by different parties to achieve vested party interests at the cost of the nation and the people.

Norms and Values of Ideal Citizenship Fading Away

The historical spirit of the unification of the nation was intact during the monarchical era. Even after 1990, “One nation, one language, one religion, and one culture,” was maintained somehow within the diversity. Unfortunately, during the tumultuous period of 1996 to 2006, some left-winger political forces, have exploited political volatility to promote identity-based politics at the cost of national unity. Individual loyalty of citizens now eroding which creates adverse impacts on country and state institutions (Shrestha, 2019). One classic example of this prediction is that Nepal has lost its National Unity Day and may never be able to revive it.

Weak Government Institutions

Political leaders, judiciary members, and top bureaucrats have been not only maintaining close contacts far beyond the acceptable limit with foreign agencies but are instrumental in executing their aspirations and orders. INGOs have opened cells to operate within various important ministries and are busy formulating national policies and advising ministers to ridicule the system and achieve the interests of the financing external powers. Nepali moles recruited by external powers are actively informing, activating, and implementing foreign orders. It is said that political leaders, bureaucrats, and security forces officers lobby for support for their promotions. Loyalty, patriotism, integrity, honesty, service ethics, and accountability factors are amiss (BTI; Nepal Country Report, 2022).

Trust Deficit between National Security Council and Security Organizations

National Security Council (NSC) was established after 1990 to fulfill the constitutional provision of the national security domain which include the safeguarding of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and ensuring freedom. NSC is also responsible to define job responsibilities for security forces to protect constitutional provisions. However, NDC/NSC always curbed security forces for limited roles and duties.

Every successive government after 1990 could not institutionalize NSC at all. It was simply because the power of Army mobilization was kept under the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Army; the King. There have been many examples of Supreme Commander refusing to mobilize the Army at a time when it was needed. For instance, then Home Minister Govinda Raj Joshi tendered his resignation on 29 Sept 2000, immediately after Dunai was attacked by CPN Maoist. He had a strong disagreement with Army for not providing support to police against attack. In another account when PM Girija Prasad Koirala ordered Army to mobilize against Maoist in July 2001 after the Holeri police post-attack, Army showed reluctance to mobilize; instead conditioning the declaration of emergency, all-party consensus, and labeling Maoist as terrorists (KC, 2006). This legacy always saw Army as a prowler to politicians and democracy then the smooth functioning of the NSC remained blurred.

Agricultural Dependency

Till 1990, Nepal was self-sufficient in agricultural products and certain surplus commodities were exported abroad. Regardless of population growth today, while almost one-fourth of the population remains abroad; Today Nepal, an agrarian nation imports all agricultural products from India enormously. Nepali vegetables and fruits packed for exports to India are often left stagnating in quarantine facilities endlessly to decay while Indian commodities at disproportionate prices are pushed into the Nepali market forcefully. Land appropriate for agricultural purposes is either left barren due to a shortage of labor or used for urbanization purposes. People motivated to initiate agriculture are left with scorched barren fields because the water of the Nepali rivers needs permission from abroad to be diverted for irrigation.

Symptoms of State Failure

As most of the fatalities of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic have been linked directly to the lack of oxygen supply, the unhealthy competition to gain or retain oxygen cylinders has increased. The situation was further aggravated when hospitals turned patients away citing their inability to supply oxygen to the patients admitted to the hospitals. More ironic is the hospitals suggested publicly to the relatives of the patients to self-manage the oxygen. Consequently, people have started to lose faith in public health and amass oxygen cylinders in their own houses for emergency use. Similarly, education in Nepal is being a political tool and most of the government-run institutions are functioning as party recruiting centers. Politicians, students, and teachers are tantamount these days. The knowledge that has to be pursued through constant toil is now equated with easily earned certificates. Certainly, this sort of designed battle of the new republic of Nepal may lead to state failure (Shakya, 2009, pp. 225-228).

PROSPECTS FOR HOME-GROWN APPROACH

Outlooks of a Holistic Approach

The holistic approach is a process wherein the state actors and non-state actors from formal and informal sectors have a joint coordinated action plan to develop the entire nation as a whole. Additionally, it encompasses some groups like mutual self-help, philanthropic service, campaign advocacy, and participatory self-governance to formulate an understanding and proper fusion between themselves, which makes the state function smoothly. It covers multiple sectors such as health, education, environment, infrastructure development, and security including citizens' self-governance within the designated political constituency (Bhatta, 2008).

Currently, the concept seems abstract and blurring, possibly making it confusing for anyone to comprehend. But we can always equate and emulate the unification campaign, where the then Great King Prithvi Narayan Shah requested the communities to contribute men with arms to wage war against the adversary. Gorkha had been outnumbered by human resources and logistics back up but the communities sent their able volunteers with arms and food to fight wars to expand, develop and prosper. His shared ambitions always asked for the opinion of Kazis, Nobles, and Citizens and were holistically scheduled for the unification campaign. That is how the dream of unification of Nepal became a reality (Stiller, 2017. pp. 82-94). There had been several other modern examples as well to mention where Nepali citizens were connected by pride in history.

National Development Service (NDS)

The NDS was alien to the Nepali minds around the 1960s when it was first introduced. It was based on a smaller program named 'Nepal Darshan' which was initiated in 1964-65 by the Ministry of Education wherein college students were exposed to the rural life of Nepal to instill a need for development and appreciate the intensity of rural problems. The sole purpose of this program was to create harmony between the youths and their perception of what development was. The program was indigenous and based on mobilizing volunteers in different fields such as health, education, environment, and infrastructure development (Bhatta, 2009).

The program also provided a platform for the youths to explore uncharted territories and groom themselves to become aware and responsible citizens who in return would help for the overall development. The program was meticulously devised to suit the needs of Nepal. It played a vital role in development activities and helped to create a sense of civic belonging among youth under the leadership of the then Crown Prince Birendra Bir Bikram Shah.

The NDS was an authentic medium to integrate and guide the youths in nation-building through good citizenship and ownership. Along with continuity of their studies and application of theoretical knowledge on the ground, it also motivated students for national development service. The program concisely identified the raw and young minds as agents of change in society, and this played a crucial role among youths in developing notions of service and loyalty towards the state among youths.

Back to Village Campaign

The 'Back to Village Campaign' was an innovative concept introduced by the then King Mahendra who ruled Nepal from 1955 to 1972. It aimed to direct development efforts to rural areas where the majority of the Nepali people lived. A part of the program was originally known as the 'Back to the Village Campaign.' The civil servants and students from the cities were sent to live in rural communities and participate in developmental works and serve as teachers, agriculturists in the villages (Shroff, 2007).

University professors, lecturers, bank managers, section officers, and other cadres were digging with shovels, lifting stones, and plastering up the stone blocks with cement. The campaign was directed to educate the youths about the existing obstructions to national development and expected to eradicate malpractices in societies.

The very idea of cooperatives was expanded and propagated. The people were made aware of the importance of the forests and wildlife and were encouraged to plant tree saplings. Cottage industries were encouraged and extended in keeping with the blueprint of the national campaign. It was an eye-opener to the people that even the bureaucrats and technicians could help them improve the life standard of the country as a whole.

National Cadet Corps Training: An Initiative to Transform Youth into Able Citizens

Nepal Army has been instrumental since 1965 in providing effective training to the school level volunteers of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) to instill essential values such as patriotism, discipline, and sense of responsibility, and leadership traits to instill and develop personality shaping attributes. Through this training, young students felt very confident, patriotic, more aware, connected with diverse cultures, and felt empowered.

The training includes both theoretical classes and practical exercises. The course of instruction contains historical aspects of national unification, socio-cultural and religious affinities, community service, foreign policy, disaster response and rescue operations, and facets of national security. Practical exercises are conducted in all 77 districts with the joint participation of the officials of the district administration, local governing bodies, and the Army units. This initiative has added impetus to the holistic approach of our young generation distinctly (Pandit, personal communication, May 27, 2021).

DEVISING A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Professionalism, as well as proper character, attributes as a patriot is lacking in the bureaucrats, judiciary, technocrats, security services, and diplomats. Rather than serving the people effectively and punctually, they have bureaucratized as well as politicized the sequence of operation. To repair the damages, we should carefully devise the approaches as follows.

Traditional Approaches to be Refurbished

The basis of national unity should be looked into our shared historical past and its cultural mixing which alone gives the ideas of what values Nepal stands for the sentiment for togetherness. Hence, we should harness connectors of citizenship building. Established factors that depict the identity of Nepal and maintain symbols and themes that unite the people and enhance spirit-de-corps for the sake of nurturing and maintaining national unity, then select the right norms and values to be adopted to safeguard the nation. Therefore, traditional approaches to citizenship building programs should be refurbished such as the NDS.

Effective Supervision of NGOs/INGOs and Their National Narrative

The holistic approach requires true volunteer services and contributions to a common cause. But services or contributions based on voluntarism have been severely prejudiced by INGOs/NGOs. Traditional service activities such as cultural, social, and religious ties seem to be distorted in the present context. None of the convincing national narratives has been in effect to integrate youths into the national civic purpose and flourishing the sense of development. Strengthening the able youth service as a tool for nation-building has been largely overlooked by every successive government (Bhatta, 2016). Thus, this matter has to be taken seriously by all the stakeholders ensuring the implementation of a holistic approach through youth participation and development programs.

National Education Policy

Our schools, colleges, and universities have marginalized Nepali history and hence the young generation is unaware of the pride of being a Nepali. Furthermore, educational institutions and vocational training centers should train and prepare the standard technocrats, bureaucrats, and other requisite manpower to serve the nation. A pragmatic education policy should be framed and implemented to educate, train and prepare qualified manpower in all necessary fields. History and culture must be taught compulsorily to the younger generation to motivate them how our forefathers toiled to unify, preserve, maintain and enhance the international credibility of our motherland.

Credible Foreign Policy

Due to geopolitical compulsions, Nepal is facing a serious crisis. Thus, economics and politics must enhance the international image to maintain credibility. Our foreign policy should be properly formulated and adopted with strictness to display our sovereignty. Neighboring nations are actively exercising to reduce and contain our relationship with the world and international organizations while our diplomats are being perfunctory and servile in their responsibilities. Our corps of Nepali diplomats should be highly trained, dedicated, patriotic, eloquent, and able to articulate effectively in negotiations. They should also possess detailed knowledge of economics and international law. We need to be mindful that if diplomacy fails, the only other option is the use of force, which may cost hefty to the nation.

Counterintelligence

Eminent Muslim personalities have been framed as smugglers, criminals, mafia members, and in league with the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and targeted rampantly by other external powers. Law-enforcing agencies seem to be in cahoots with the said external power. All the accounts discussed above give us a sense of instability that is there in Nepal regarding the personal safety of its citizen as it is said to have become a shelter for many mafias and underworld gangsters of neighboring countries. Neither the national intelligence can confirm nor refute such allegations. Ultimately, doubts have been raised about whether the government can fulfill the state obligation to protect its citizens from proxy interferences and interests. Thus, we must maintain an effective intelligence organization to enhance good governance, protection of territorial integrity and safeguard the nation from internal and external threats and maintain an effective counterintelligence organization to vet individuals who are recruited for security services, bureaucracy, judiciary, and public appointments. Nepali subjects operating to serve foreign interests or against national interests should be tracked, identified, exposed, and severely punished.

Assertive Agriculture Policy

Nepal needs to produce sufficient fertilizers, implement irrigation schemes to supply water and motivate citizens to develop food production capacity. The import of foreign agricultural products should be banned and open surplus food depots to supply the needy citizens in remote areas. It should also control the market supply and prices and attain food sufficiency at the earliest.

Competent Security Forces

A nation needs its capacity to defend itself from both internal and external threats. The inability to do so invites trouble to create problems. Nepali inability to protect its internal security and territorial integrity against encroachments has invited a full-blown insurgency. Therefore, all the security forces must be equipped with adequate capabilities to accomplish the assigned roles. The nation may lose its sovereignty and integrity while the standing security forces remain motionless in the barracks. The capability of the security forces must be able to accomplish the aspirations of the people and deter an aggressor.

CONCLUSION

Nepal's geo-complexity has allured massive peripheral interferences in the internal affairs of Nepal. Identity politics, individuality, and communality have taken precedence over national interests. The agony perpetrated by foreign intelligence

agencies and servile Nepali agents has undermined the Nepali sovereignty, freedom, and independence. The nation is lacking to provide fundamental prerequisites such as good service, justice, education, health services, and employment scope to the citizens to demand their services to protect the nation in all emergencies. Thus, the political chaos is reeling due to the shortage of shrewd leadership with a vision who is responsible and accountable to safeguard its vital interests.

Unless the citizens of the nation-state feel a sense of oneness and camaraderie among each other to jointly build the nation to live in a well-developed society; change is not possible. This civic participation wherein there is a strong connection between the citizens and the state can only be achieved by schooling a sense of ownership among all the citizens. This can be strengthened by developing better attitudes among all the citizens and ensuring that sentiments are willing to contribute to building a new society. This very sense can only be instilled when the young generation is groomed up and brought up in an environment, which molds them to direct all their actions towards nation-building in a holistic approach.

The notion of citizenship and good governance normally comes through service to society which can be instilled in youth through various volunteer and civic programs. A volunteer civic service to society is the bridge that connects youth patriotism with development because it helps to foster new relationships with the state based on consent rather than compulsion. If citizens are provided with a theme of cooperation, political security, and a concept of societal responsibility with optimism, the people will motivate each other, reorganize and unite to achieve the set goals. Hence, an evolutionary initiative inculcating an indigenous holistic approach must be introduced to save and consolidate the nation and its citizens.

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