

**Indo-Nepal Open Border: Impacts on National Security and Regional Stability of Nepal****Arjun Prasad Pokharel<sup>1\*</sup>**<sup>1\*</sup> Tribhuvan University, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, Department of Political ScienceORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1818-5312>\*Email: [mmc.arjunpokharel@gmail.com](mailto:mmc.arjunpokharel@gmail.com)

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**Abstract**

The open border between Nepal and India is one of the most unique border regimes in the world, letting citizens of both nations travel without needing to carry a visa or passport. This study examines the Nepal–India open border and its impact on Nepal’s national security through a qualitative analysis of secondary data derived from scholarly literature, government reports, policy documents, and security assessments. The study focuses on a holistic analysis of security, encompassing both the traditional and non-traditional security aspects, such as political, economic, social and human security. Analysis shows that the open border has played an important role in the economic growth, cultural exchange, education and cooperation of the region, but it has also opened up the field for vulnerabilities that have been taken advantage of by criminal networks and extremist groups. The study also shows that these security challenges have become more pronounced due to poor border governance, poor institutional coordination and changing threats across borders. The article proposes the adoption of border management arrangements and mechanisms in cooperation, intelligence sharing, technological surveillance, and legal frameworks to reconcile the practical and historical benefits of border openness against security concerns between Nepal and India.

**Keywords:** Nepal–India Border, national security, border management, human trafficking, regional security

**Introduction**

Throughout history borders have been significant demarcations of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and national identity. In today's globalized world, borders control the movements of people, goods, services and ideas, and also act as tools for national security (Newman 2006). Globalization, migration, technology and regional integration have changed the nature of borders, which are now more interdependent. Borders are not just barriers but are spaces that bring together people from different countries, connect them, and foster interaction, cooperation, and exchange (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013). However, this transformation has also created complex security

issues, especially in border areas where borders are either under-regulated or open.

The relationship between border openness and national security has become a major subject of scholarly debate. Proponents of open-border systems argue that unrestricted movement enhances economic growth, labor mobility, cultural integration, and regional cooperation (Andreas, 2003). Conversely, critics contend that porous borders facilitate illegal migration, organized crime, trafficking networks, terrorism, and other transnational security threats (Buzan et al., 1998). Consequently, governments across the world face the challenge of balancing the economic and social benefits derived from

open borders with the need to safeguard national security and sovereignty.

South Asia provides a crucial context for understanding these tensions. The region is characterized by extensive cross-border migration, historical interdependence, ethnic linkages, and persistent security concerns. Among South Asian borders, the Nepal–India border occupies a unique position. Unlike most international borders, it permits the free movement of citizens of both countries without requiring passports or visas. This arrangement originates from centuries of historical interaction and was further institutionalized through the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1950. The treaty granted reciprocal rights concerning residence, property ownership, employment, trade, and movement between Nepal and India.

Nepal's geopolitical location significantly contributes to the strategic importance of the border. Situated between India and China, Nepal occupies a sensitive position in regional geopolitics. Often described as a "yam between two boulders" by King Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepal's security environment is influenced by its relations with both neighboring powers. The open border with India has historically facilitated trade, labor migration, cultural exchange, and religious interaction. Millions of Nepalese citizens work, study, and reside in India, while Indian citizens engage in trade and business activities within Nepal. These interactions have fostered deep social and economic interdependence between the two countries.

The Nepal–India border extends approximately 1,850 kilometers and traverses five Indian states: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Sikkim. Over time, communities living along the border have developed shared linguistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural characteristics. Cross-border marriages, festivals, trade networks, and kinship ties have created a unique socio-cultural landscape that blurs conventional distinctions between populations on either side of the border.

Despite these benefits, concerns regarding border security have intensified in recent decades. The increasing sophistication of transnational criminal networks has exposed vulnerabilities associated with unrestricted cross-border movement. Research indicates that the Nepal–India border has become a transit route for human trafficking, drug smuggling, arms trafficking, counterfeit currency circulation, illegal trade, and terrorist movement (Das, 2013; Kansakar, 2012). Human trafficking remains particularly alarming, with thousands of women and children reportedly trafficked across the border annually. Similarly, the border has been linked to the movement of small arms, narcotics, and counterfeit currency networks operating across South Asia.

Security analysts have also expressed concerns regarding the exploitation of the border by extremist groups. During Nepal's Maoist insurgency (1996–2006), insurgents reportedly used border regions as safe havens and logistical corridors. Likewise, Indian security agencies have frequently raised concerns about the use of Nepalese territory by anti-India elements and transnational terrorist organizations (Muni, 2012). Although direct links between international terrorist organizations and Nepalese insurgent groups remain contested, the porous nature of the border continues to generate security anxieties for both countries.

Recent scholarship has increasingly highlighted the multidimensional nature of national security. Traditional security perspectives focused primarily on military threats and territorial defense. However, contemporary security studies emphasize non-traditional security dimensions, including economic security, human security, environmental security, cyber security, and societal security (Buzan et al., 1998). Within this broader framework, the Nepal–India border presents challenges that extend beyond conventional military concerns. Issues such as human trafficking, illicit financial flows, demographic changes, organized crime, and cross-border environmental problems have become integral components of Nepal's national security discourse.

Several scholars have examined aspects of Nepal–India border relations. Kansakar (2012) analyzed the historical evolution of the open border and identified both opportunities and security concerns. Das (2013) emphasized the economic benefits of border openness while highlighting emerging security threats. Muni (2012) explored the strategic dimensions of Nepal–India relations and the implications of border governance. Shrestha (2006) examined border disputes and their implications for bilateral relations. More recent studies have investigated borderland governance, migration dynamics, human trafficking, and transnational crime in South Asia (Banerjee, 2021; Singh, 2020; Sharma & Suwal, 2022).

While these studies provide valuable insights, many focus either on economic interdependence or isolated security issues. Limited attention has been devoted to examining how multiple security dimensions intersect within the context of Nepal's national security. Furthermore, evolving geopolitical realities, increasing regional connectivity, and emerging non-traditional threats necessitate a more comprehensive reassessment of the implications of the Nepal–India open border.

The Nepal–India open border has historically served as a foundation for bilateral cooperation, socio-cultural integration, and economic development. However, increasing cross-border criminal activities, human trafficking, arms smuggling, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and terrorist infiltration have raised significant concerns regarding Nepal's national security. Despite efforts by both governments to strengthen border management and security cooperation, the porous nature of the border continues to create vulnerabilities that can be exploited by state and non-state actors. Existing policy responses have often been fragmented, reactive, and insufficiently coordinated. Consequently, the challenge facing Nepal is not whether to maintain or close the open border but how to effectively manage border openness while protecting national security interests.

The central problem addressed in this study is the growing tension between the socio-economic benefits of border openness and the security vulnerabilities arising from inadequate border governance. Understanding this tension is critical for developing effective strategies that preserve the historical advantages of the open border while minimizing associated security risks. Although extensive literature exists on Nepal–India relations, border management, migration, and security issues, several important gaps remain.

First, many studies examine the Nepal–India border from either an economic or geopolitical perspective, often neglecting the multidimensional security implications associated with border openness. Second, existing research frequently focuses on individual threats such as trafficking or terrorism without considering how these threats collectively influence Nepal's national security architecture. Third, limited scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding the interaction between traditional and non-traditional security challenges within the Nepal–India border context. Finally, contemporary developments such as technological transformation, transnational criminal networks, regional integration initiatives, and evolving geopolitical competition have not been adequately incorporated into existing analyses.

This study seeks to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive assessment of the Nepal–India open border and its implications for Nepal's national security from political, economic, social, and human security perspectives. The study is conducted to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To examine the security implications of the Nepal–India open border on Nepal's national security.
2. To analyze existing and emerging cross-border security challenges and assess mechanisms for their effective management.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to academic scholarship, policy formulation, security governance, and regional cooperation. The Nepal–India open border remains one of the most distinctive border arrangements globally, yet its implications continue to generate intense debate among policymakers, scholars, security agencies, and civil society actors. Understanding the complex relationship between border openness and national security is therefore both academically relevant and practically important.

## Methodology

This study relies on a qualitative research design, focusing on understanding the complex dynamics of the Nepal–India open border and its impact on Nepal’s national security. Given the nature of the research questions, which aim to explore multidimensional security challenges rather than generate numerical predictions, a qualitative approach is most appropriate. This allows for an in-depth exploration of historical, social, political, and economic factors that shape border security and governance.

The research primarily draws upon secondary data sources. These include academic journal articles, government reports, policy briefs, security assessments, newspaper reports, and previous studies on the Nepal–India border. By reviewing a wide range of literature, the study integrates multiple perspectives and ensures that conclusions are informed by evidence rather than anecdotal accounts. Reports from organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Human Rights Watch, and regional security think tanks were also consulted to provide up-to-date information on human trafficking, arms smuggling, and other transnational crimes. In examining security challenges, the study considers both traditional and non-traditional aspects of national security. Traditional security focuses on military threats, border protection, and state sovereignty, while non-traditional security encompasses human security, economic threats, organized crime, and social stability. This dual perspective allows for a

holistic understanding of how the open border affects Nepal’s security landscape.

Data were analyzed thematically, identifying recurring patterns, risks, and opportunities associated with the open border. Themes include transnational crime, human trafficking, arms and drug smuggling, the impact of insurgent movements, economic interdependence, and socio-cultural interactions. By synthesizing findings across multiple sources, the study identifies key areas where border openness intersects with national security concerns. The study also reviews historical documents, treaties, and bilateral agreements to trace the evolution of border policies. For example, the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship and subsequent agreements provide important context for understanding why the border has remained open and how its governance has developed over time. This historical approach helps to explain current security vulnerabilities while recognizing the long-standing social and economic connections between Nepal and India.

Limitations of this methodology include the reliance on secondary data, which may contain biases or inconsistencies depending on the source. Some security-related information is sensitive and may be underreported or partially available. Despite these challenges, triangulating multiple sources, including government reports, academic research, and international assessments, enhances the reliability of findings. Where possible, data from both Nepalese and Indian perspectives were included to provide a balanced view. By combining qualitative thematic analysis, historical review, and multi-source triangulation, this methodology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex security implications of the Nepal–India open border. It allows for an examination of both risks and benefits, offering insights into how border policies affect national security, economic interdependence, and socio-cultural relations.

## Findings

The Nepal–India open border has long been celebrated for fostering cultural integration, economic interdependence, and people-to-people ties between the two nations. However, the very characteristics that make this border unique, its permeability, historical openness, and minimal bureaucratic control, have also produced significant and multifaceted security challenges for Nepal. This section presents detailed findings from scholarly research, field observations, legal analyses, and documented enforcement activities relating to border security, organized crime, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, governance constraints, and socio-economic consequences. These findings show that the security implications of the open border are neither isolated nor uniform but span across traditional and non-traditional security domains.

### ***Border Permeability and Structural Vulnerability***

The Nepal–India border stretches over approximately 1,850 kilometres and is legally defined as open for citizens of both countries, allowing movement without visas or passports under the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship (Bhat, 2024). This level of structural permeability is rare in contemporary international border regimes and creates conditions where routine identity verification is minimal and enforcement capabilities are stretched thin. Border governance research shows that when physical controls are weak and institutional monitoring is limited, illicit actors exploit these gaps for unauthorized movement of people and contraband (Bhat, 2024).

Unlike regulated international borders; where checkpoints, biometric systems, and integrated databases track entries and exits; the Nepal–India border’s openness means that large sections remain controlled only by local security forces or community networks. This situation weakens the capacity of state authorities to pre-emptively identify risks, as intelligence collection is hampered by the absence of systematic border data. Moreover, geopolitical scholars note that porous borders often function as conduits for both legitimate and illicit flows,

making national security outcomes highly contingent on governance frameworks rather than physical barriers alone.

### ***Human Trafficking: A Persistent Security and Human Rights Crisis***

Human trafficking stands out as one of the most severe and well-documented security challenges associated with the Nepal–India open border. Both Nepal and India are identified as source, transit, and destination countries in the global human trafficking landscape, and the Terai region’s cross-border corridor remains a focal point for exploitation (Upadhyay & Arora, 2025).

This Research highlights that trafficking manifests in multiple forms along this border, sexual exploitation, bonded labour, forced domestic work, and other forms of modern slavery, and that women and children are disproportionately affected. Studies show that, despite national laws and international anti-trafficking protocols, systemic enforcement gaps and socio-economic vulnerabilities create persistent avenues for traffickers to operate (Chetry & Pande, 2019; Patel, 2025). Empirical evidence demonstrates the scale and nature of trafficking activities. For instance, in coordinated law enforcement actions in border districts such as Madhubani and Bhachkahi, security forces have rescued minors and women who were lured with deceptive promises; such as dance performance contracts or employment; only to be trafficked for exploitation (Times of India, 2026). These rescue operations illustrate both the ongoing exploitation and the limitations of existing prevention mechanisms.

Scholars have critiqued the dominant policy focus on arrest and rescue as insufficient without a deeper engagement with root causes such as poverty, gender inequality, and institutional weaknesses (Bhagat & Yea, 2024). Indeed, a broader analysis of human trafficking in the Indo-Nepal Terai region reveals that economic disparities, lack of employment opportunities, and inadequate victim protection protocols exacerbate vulnerabilities to trafficking (Upadhyay & Arora, 2025). The legal and

institutional frameworks on both sides of the border; such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act in India and the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act in Nepal; exist but are often undermined by resource constraints, limited cross-border coordination, and inconsistent prosecution practices.

In sum, human trafficking across the open border is not a sporadic anomaly but an entrenched and multi-layered security threat. It is embedded within socio-economic structures that transcend administrative boundaries and requires a deeper, sustained policy response beyond episodic enforcement.

### ***Organized Crime and Illicit Economies***

Beyond human trafficking, organized crime poses significant threats to Nepal's internal stability and regional security. Transnational criminal networks exploit the border's permeability to conduct narcotics trafficking, smuggling of small arms, counterfeit currency circulation, and contraband trade.

Academic research on cross-border crime emphasizes that criminal governance often fills enforcement gaps in poorly regulated borderlands, enabling syndicates to operate through informal routes and networks (Legrand & Leuprecht, 2021). In the context of the Nepal–India border, such networks leverage weak institutional coordination, inconsistent legal frameworks, and limited surveillance to move illicit goods and persons with relative ease. Documentation of recent smuggling arrests near the Nepal–India border underscores this dynamic. For example, in 2025, Indian police apprehended a reputed narcotics smuggler near Raxaul; a major border crossing—highlighting how drug networks cross jurisdictions to extend their reach into urban markets.

Transnational criminal law scholarship points to the challenges of harmonizing legal responses across countries with divergent judicial systems, legal definitions, and enforcement priorities (Coyle, 2025). These challenges are manifest along the Nepal–India border, where

differing criminal statutes and evidentiary standards undermine deterrence and prosecution of cross-border crimes. Criminal networks exploit these jurisdictional disparities to evade arrest or secure lighter penalties in one jurisdiction over another.

Moreover, the smuggling of counterfeit currency and contraband goods further drains local economies and undermines the rule of law. While there is limited systematic data on the volume of these activities, law enforcement reports and security analyses indicate that these crimes are recurring and sophisticated, leveraging informal market linkages, familial and social networks, and technological communication tools that evade simple detection.

In sum, organized crime along the Nepal–India border represents a persistent and evolving threat that intersects with both national and regional security concerns, requiring cooperative legal and enforcement strategies that extend beyond bilateral goodwill.

### ***Illegal Migration and Security Vulnerabilities***

The open border encourages high levels of mobility of people for economic, educational, social, and cultural reasons, but this same mobility also facilitates irregular migration and unauthorized entry by non-citizens. Studies of cross-border migration patterns along the Nepal–India boundary highlight that the ease of movement enables not only regular labour mobility but also cases of unauthorized entries that escape systematic observation (Khadka, 2023).

Irregular migration complicates security planning, particularly where identity verification mechanisms are limited or absent. Without border controls that capture individual movements, security agencies lack reliable demographic data to monitor who enters and exits the country at any given time—a vulnerability that can be exploited by criminal elements or extremist groups. Migration scholars have highlighted that unregulated flows can produce “zones of invisibility” where exploitation,

criminal recruitment, and unmonitored settlement occur. The phenomenon of Rohingya refugees crossing through the open border into Nepal; which has been documented in case studies; illustrates how unregulated movement can introduce new categories of legal and humanitarian vulnerability into an already complex security landscape (Khadka, 2023). Such movements are not limited to South Asian nationals and raise questions about the capacity of Nepal's border governance to respond to broader geopolitical migration pressures.

Thus, while mobility across the open border contributes to bilateral socioeconomic integration, it also obscures the distinction between lawful and unlawful movement, weakening Nepal's capacity to anticipate and respond to emerging security threats.

### *Institutional Constraints and Governance Gaps*

One of the most pressing findings in the literature concerns the institutional constraints that undermine effective border governance. Although both Nepal and India have formal agreements and coordination mechanisms, the operationalization of such frameworks remains inconsistent. The concept of *border governance*; which emphasizes collaborative management, accountability, and synchronized enforcement; is advanced in academic literature as an alternative to purely militaristic or administrative control.

Border governance frameworks advocate for shared intelligence networks, harmonized patrols, mutual data sharing protocols, and community engagement in surveillance and reporting. However, the Nepal–India border lacks a comprehensive governance mechanism that integrates these elements across the entire length of the boundary. Research specifically examining border management systems identifies gaps in institutional communication, legal harmonization, and coordinated policy implementation, all of which reduce the effectiveness of responses to trafficking, smuggling, and irregular migration threats (Bhat, 2024).

Institutional constraints also manifest in training deficiencies, resource limitations, and infrastructure gaps at land crossing points where official security presence is weakest. Border governance scholars argue that sustainable security must be supported by capacity building, standardized operational procedures, and long-term cooperative frameworks rather than ad hoc or episodic interventions.

### *Socio-Economic Interdependence and Border Opportunities*

Despite the myriad of security challenges, the Nepal–India open border continues to generate significant socio-economic benefits that complicate the security narrative. The open border facilitates informal and formal trade, labour mobility, remittances, educational opportunities, and cultural exchange that help sustain livelihoods in border regions. Rajeev Kumar's analysis suggests that border openness can function as a "springboard for opportunities," fostering shared identity, economic cooperation, and communitarian stability that can indirectly reinforce peace and security (Kumar, 2016).

Remittances from Nepalese migrant workers in India contribute substantially to household incomes and rural development, mitigating poverty and reducing social stressors that might otherwise fuel crime or unrest. Meanwhile, cross-border trade in agricultural products, services, and consumer goods supports local markets and livelihoods.

However, socio-economic interdependence also generates informal economies that are not fully recorded or regulated, which can intersect with illicit trade pathways. The dual nature of these economic interactions; supporting legitimate livelihoods while creating informal networks that can be co-opted by criminal actors; highlights the need for nuanced policy responses that preserve economic benefits while strengthening enforcement and governance.

### **Discussion**

The findings outlined above reveal a complex, multi-layered relationship between the Nepal–India open border and Nepal’s national security. Rather than presenting a straightforward trade-off between benefits and risks, the evidence shows that border openness creates a dynamic socio-economic and geopolitical space where opportunities and vulnerabilities are deeply entangled. This section interprets these findings within broader theoretical frameworks, compares them with international border security scholarship, and explores their implications for policy and practice.

Traditional national security paradigms have historically focused on territorial defense and military threats. However, the evidence gathered here underscores that contemporary security must encompass non-traditional dimensions, including human security, economic stability, and institutional governance. Human trafficking, irregular migration, organized crime, and cross-border smuggling transcend territorial definitions of security and require approaches grounded in human rights, socio-economic development, and cooperative enforcement.

Theoretical work on border governance emphasizes that security should not be limited to controlling movement at a physical boundary. Instead, it must integrate institutional capacity across agencies, synchronize legal frameworks, and engage communities as active partners in surveillance and prevention. This reconceptualization aligns with the lived reality of the Nepal–India border, where people’s identities, livelihoods, and mobility are deeply interwoven with cross-border interactions.

The persistence of human trafficking along the open border reflects structural drivers—such as poverty, gender inequality, and limited economic opportunities; that are rooted in broader socio-economic conditions. While anti-trafficking operations recover victims and apprehend traffickers, these enforcement efforts address only the symptoms of a deeper problem. Scholarly research on trafficking borders highlights that punitive enforcement can inadvertently create carceral protectionist spaces

that restrict mobility without addressing root vulnerabilities (Bhagat & Yea, 2024). For example, confinement measures risk treating victims as security problems rather than individuals in need of protection, complicating reintegration and recovery. Moreover, gender dynamics are central to understanding trafficking patterns. Women and girls often face added risk due to socio-cultural norms that limit access to education and employment, making them more susceptible to exploitation (Chetry & Pande, 2019). Meaningful policy responses must therefore combine law enforcement with robust social safety nets, gender-responsive economic opportunities, and community awareness programs. The frequency of high-profile rescues and joint patrols illustrates the severity of the trafficking challenge and the need for sustained, institutionalized cooperation between Nepalese and Indian authorities.

Organized crime along the Nepal–India border represents not only a security threat but a governance challenge. Transnational criminal networks exploit institutional fragmentation, legal disparities, and limited coordination among enforcement agencies. The arrest of narcotics smugglers and repeated anti-smuggling operations demonstrate that progress is possible, but also that law enforcement action must be part of a wider strategy that includes cross-jurisdictional legal harmonization and intelligence sharing. Border governance scholarship suggests that institutional integration; through shared databases, harmonized protocols, joint investigation units, and reciprocal legal assistance, is a necessary condition for sustainable border security. These approaches have been successful in other regions where coordinated policy networks help manage illicit flows without impeding legitimate mobility (Legrand & Leuprecht, 2021).

Irregular migration highlights the limitations of existing border management practices. Because movement is largely untracked, authorities lack reliable data on who is present in border zones at any given time. This information deficit weakens planning, makes it harder to anticipate threats, and limits effective

humanitarian responses. International border research emphasizes the importance of data-driven policy; using biometric systems, interoperable databases, and real-time analytics; to strengthen border management while respecting human rights. The trial deployment of face and ID scanners at select points on the Nepal–India border demonstrates a move in this direction. Such technological interventions, when carefully integrated with legal safeguards, can help differentiate lawful travellers from irregular or suspicious actors.

Perhaps the most nuanced insight from this study is that socio-economic integration and border security are not inherently opposed. While cross-border crime and trafficking represent clear threats, the economic interdependence fostered by the open border generates livelihoods, remittances, trade opportunities, and cultural ties that can enhance resilience among border communities. Research shows that regions with stronger economic opportunities tend to exhibit lower crime rates and more stable social environments. Therefore, security strategies must not only aim to restrict harmful activities but also strengthen and formalize positive economic interactions. Supporting local entrepreneurship, facilitating formal trade linkages, and incorporating community voices into border governance can build a more secure and resilient borderland society.

The evidence points toward the need for a comprehensive, cooperative, and adaptive security framework for the Nepal–India open border; one that preserves socio-economic benefits while addressing vulnerabilities in a structured and sustainable manner. Such a framework requires political commitment, institutional cooperation, legal harmonization, community participation, and resource investment from both sides of the border. At the heart of this approach is the concept of *border governance*, which encompasses collaborative management of flows, joint enforcement mechanisms, shared intelligence systems, and respect for human rights and local livelihoods. Border governance is not just a set of technical measures but a philosophy that reframes borders

as spaces of managed interaction rather than passive lines of separation. Implementation of such frameworks must be grounded in evidence. For example, integrated standard operating procedures (SOPs) designed to target various stages of trafficking networks; from recruitment to transit and exploitation; have been called for in expert analyses. These SOPs would enable joint enforcement and enhance border security while ensuring victim protection and legal compliance (Banerjee, 2021).

### Conclusion

The Nepal-India open border is a case study on the complexity of opportunity and vulnerability, and that openness of the border is not necessarily good or bad. This study has demonstrated that the open border facilitates socio-economic integration, cross-border trade, labour mobility and cultural exchange, which in turn improve regional cooperation and local livelihoods, but at the same time, it also opens up structural vulnerabilities that can be exploited by traffickers, organized criminal networks and irregular migrants. The evidence shows that issues of institutional coordination, differences in legislation, and inadequate surveillance systems exacerbate threats of human trafficking, narcotics trafficking, the trafficking of arms, and illegal migration. Importantly, these non-traditional security threats are not related to the traditional military and territorial security aspect of the country but also encompass aspects of human, economic and institutional security in addition to traditional defense aspects.

Nepal needs a comprehensive, coordinated response that steps up the security agenda side-by-side with the socio-economic and cultural advantages of border openness. Greater institutional coordination, strengthening of legal frameworks to India, use of technologies for surveillance and community participation are essential to reduce vulnerabilities and ensure continuity of legitimate cross-border activities. In addition, there is a need to tackle the root causes of insecurity, including poverty, gender inequality and lack of economic opportunity to combat human trafficking and irregular

migration. Finally, this is a policy challenge for developing policies that are adaptable, evidence-based, and cooperative: durable security is not just about being restrictive, but it is about strategic governance, regional partnership, and careful social and economic development and law enforcement integration that would help ensure national security in an open border.

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