

The Impact of Covid-19 on National Security of Nepal

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Abstract

With the announcement of a nationwide lockdown from 24th March 2020 in Nepal, national security is no longer limited to the proper use of economic power, political authority, and diplomacy. Public and private offices have asked their employees to work from home in the online space considering the uncertainty about the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The introduction of the 'new normal' to maintain physical distance and perform the task from cyber/online space has demanded the redefinition of the concept of national security, i.e., beyond the protection of nation and citizens from potential attacks and ensuring the guard of the state secrets. With the responsibility to undertake the regular duties including preparation for war, investigation of crimes, safeguard of national territories, and the establishment of peace and order, the security forces of Nepal are piled up with another challenging responsibility of preventing cybercrime and its byproduct in this ongoing digital era. As the security forces of Nepal are occupied with the task to address the pandemic situation, it is likely that criminals and terrorists take advantage of it and cause rampant cybercrimes. Electronic Transaction Act, 2063B.S (2008A.D) is the major law that authenticates, regularizes, and controls the

unauthorized use of electronic records in Nepal. This article focuses on the discussion if more than a decade older Act is sufficient to address the new cyber issues mushrooming in speedily running cyberspace. This article aims to explore various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on different aspects of the national security of Nepal with special emphasis on cyber security. The study is conducted based on data obtained from different sources. Published articles, news, documentaries, and comparative study related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on national security are searched and reviewed for this study.

Keywords: national security, cyber security, cybercrime, political security, economic security, cyberspace

Background

The scope of national security has changed over time from the state-centric to human-centric approach. National security is now interrelated with different aspects like, political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and human. With the advancement of science and technology, the property of a nation is minimalized into small things called 'data'. Therefore, the proper use and protection of data is also a concern of national security these days. This paper unfolds the relationship of these aspects

with national security and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the national security of Nepal.

National security means the protection of the state and its citizens from external threats. It signifies the capacity of a nation and its power to protect borders from external encroachment through the mobilization of military forces and other available resources. When the concept of national security emerged, it only meant the protection of state- protection of national independence, sovereignty, and territory. However, the establishment of the United Nations and United Nations Security Council widened the scope by also incorporating the notion of human security in national security. International events like WW II (1939-1945), the Cold War (1947-1991) and the bipolar world, the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (1955), globalization, and its impact are the factors that helped in redefining the national security. The concept of human security progressed when the world was transferring from bipolar into a unipolar system at the terminating phase of the cold war (Bhattarai, 2009, p. 19). The end of the cold war played a large part in diverting the concern of security from 'non-traditional' security issues (Bedeski, 1992, p. 79). Though the end of the cold war significantly decreased the external threats to the nation-states, the world started to confront with numbers of intra-state violent conflicts. Out of 103 wars since the cold war, 97 have been fought within rather than between states (Hubbert, 2000, np).

UNDP introduced the concept of human security in its 1994 Human Development Report entitled, "New Dimensions of Human Security." Steiner, in his speech on the 25th Anniversary of the Human Security concept, said that the report equates

security with people rather than territories with development and arms. The report emphasized that human security is people-centered and, "is concerned with how people live and breathe in society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities and whether they live in conflict or peace" (Human Development Report, p. 23) The whole idea revolves around the importance of providing people the "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" (Steiner, 2019, np). Recently, the UN Secretary-General said that, "Human security, national security and global security are indivisible. When people fear for their lives, their communities, societies, and countries are at increased risk. When people enjoy safety, so do their countries and the world" Steiner, 2019, np). This statement shows the need of integrating human security with national security.

In Nepal, though the records mention that the Gopalas and Mahispalas believed to have been the earliest rulers of Nepal- no extant historical evidence has yet authenticated the rule of these legendary dynasties. The succeeding regimes, such as Kiratis, Lichhavis and Malla ruled the country and shaped human behaviors based on varied religious and secular scriptures. After the unification of Nepal in 1769 AD with the Shah dynasty, the policy of active defense was introduced. National security issues have always been a major concern since the unification of Nepal as it exists between the two largest countries in Asia- India and China and for also being a landlocked country. Nepal's foreign and security policy received critical reception amidst two parallel and separate threats posed by the British East India Company to the South and by the gradually escalating Chinese presence in Tibet to the North

(Bhattarai, 2009, p. 23). Furthermore, sharing an open border with India had an enormous impact on Nepal's security and strategic perceptions, whose geostrategic position was described as 'yam between two boulders' by king Prithvi Narayan Shah.

Nepali soldiers have been recognized as the best fighting forces worldwide ever since the engagement of Nepali people in the British Army in the early nineteenth century (BBC, 2010, np) and for the Indian Army since its formation in 1947 AD. "Better to die than be a coward" is a saying that recognizes Nepali people (as Gorkhali) these days too. Such bravery, courage, and image have been the mirror of the security force to Nepal till today.

Every political change, i.e., monarchy, anarchy, oligarchy, multi-party democratic system, overthrown monarchy with federal republic system has changed the strategies and policies of national security. When the security institutions were introduced, police used to control the populations internally and the army was supposed to provide external protection. The democratic experiments of the 1950s subsequently expanded the size and scope of the security due to the need to perform many welfare functions (FES Nepal, 2008, p. 3). A decade-long peoples' movement resulted in a series of violence and counter-violence, rampant poverty, violation of human rights, enforced disappearance of people, forceful admission to the civil forces, declaration of emergency, and migration to a foreign land for the subsistence of livelihood. Thereafter the concern of national security set back into internal issues in Nepal. The political, economic, and social change and adherence to humanitarian law and human rights principles were called after signing the Comprehensive Peace Accord on 21 November 2006. With the replacement of

monarchy, the Hindu state, and unitary polity by a federal democratic republic system, Nepal through the preamble of its constitution has internalized the sovereignty of people and right to autonomy and self-rule, while maintaining freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity, independence, and dignity (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p. 1). Article 51 (a) (5) of *the Constitution* has made Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and Armed Police Force Nepal accountable to people based on national security policies (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p. 23). The approach of national security has also shifted from a military-centric approach to a human-centric approach. Human beings are now facing several threats like poverty, illiteracy, drug addiction, malnutrition, child labor, human trafficking, environmental degradation, climate change, race and caste-based discriminations, gender-based violence, domestic violence, rape, incest, acid attacks, cybercrimes, and many more. The aforementioned problems and challenges like the devastating earthquake of 25th April 2015, and its aftershocks, the undeclared blockade of the Nepal-India border, and the recent spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have grabbed the attention of the government towards saving the life and well-being of people more than the external threat on its internal values.

With the motive to save people's lives, the government declared a nationwide lockdown expecting the prevention of the outbreak of COVID-19 and to adopt the new normal. Various organizations have started to work from home via online which has posed challenges to national security in a country like ours where information technology is under-invested, under-focused, and undervalued. The nature of these threats

differs from the threats posed by inter-state conflicts and battles. Non-traditional threats like these have the potential to destabilize states and whole regions (Dupont, 2001, p. 31).

Objectives

The key objectives of this study are to (i) explore the meaning and definition of national security, (ii) assess the existing national security provision, (iii) identify challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic on the national security of Nepal, and (iv) explore next steps and recommendations.

Study Methods

To meet the objectives of the study, the key method and approach were largely qualitative. The whole study was conducted with the help of secondary data. A qualitative analysis is done from selected data available from different agencies and sources. Published articles, news, documentaries, and comparative study related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on national security were searched and reviewed for this study. Data from these multiple sources have been brought together to make a proper analysis and a conclusion.

Concept and Meaning of National Security

The word security is derived from the Latin term 'securitas' from 'securus' meaning free from anxiety (etymonline, 2020, np). It implies the state of being secure, freedom from fear (Etymologyonline, 2020, np). Security therefore means the protection of individual, family, society, community, and the nation from dangers and threat. However, no single definition of security applies to all states at every point in time. Many says that security is essentially a contested concept

(Weldom, 1953, p. 84). Arnold Wolfers who defined "Security, in an objective sense, measure the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked" also argued that 'it may not have any precise meaning at all (Wolfers, 1962, p. 451-452). Despite the vagueness and lack of clear definition, many attempts have been made to define security. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary (2000, np) defines security as the state, the feeling, or means of being secure (without fear or anxiety). Paul D. Williams argues that "security is a powerful political tool in claiming attention for priority items in the competition for government attention" (Williams, 2018, p. 2). Macmillan Dictionary (online version), defines the term as "the protection of a country's secrets and its citizens" (Hussain, 2017, np).

Definitions of national security from many scholars can be looked upon as listed below to see the changing dimension of national security.

Walter Lippmann (1943): "A nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain by war." This definition shows that national security is synonymous with physical force.

Amos Jordan and William Taylor (1981): "National security has a more extensive meaning than protection from physical harm; it also implies protection, through a variety of means, of vital economic and political interests, the loss of which could threaten fundamental values and the vitality of the state." The scope of national security is extended to the fundamental values of the state which are protected through the protection of national economic and political interest.

Nevertheless, national security is concerned only about the nation and its interest.

Charles Maier (1990): “National security... is best defined as the capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and well-being.” With time, the concept has now reached a point where it focuses that national security cannot be maintained unless an equal priority to human wellbeing and prosperity is not given.

From the above definitions, it is evident that the jurisdictional issues of national security have widened with time. It has shifted its approach from state-centric security to human-centric security, i.e., towards the maintenance and promotion of human life, their comfort, and wellbeing. The difference in approach of defining the national security has happened at both the national and international levels. Therefore, a threat to national security is whatever threatens to significantly (1) degrade the quality of life of people, or (2) narrow the range of policy choices available to their government, and the objective of national security is to sustain freedom from foreign dictation and improvement of living standards in an environmentally sustainable fashion (Romm, 1993, p. 85).

National security is a means to attain the implementation of purposeful measures of the state for the improvement of internal and external security. It also includes the ability and promptness for recognition, prevention, and overcoming of the threats to national security. It signifies the health of the nation within which citizens enjoy life, liberty, property, and participation in the productive life of society (FES Nepal, 2008, p. 1). The repeated advocacy for human rights and freedom, their prosperity, and opportunities

to save their life from potential threats and challenges have highlighted the need to be concerned about citizens while framing policies relating to national security. National security is about state security and human security. State security refers to the protection of national independence, sovereignty, and frontiers while human security includes the protection of life, liberty, and property of people. National security emphasizes multiple dimensions such as political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. For maintaining national security, the state has to provision for external and internal security management. External security covers the issues relating to border security, terrorism control, cross-border crimes, and the relationship with the neighboring countries. Contrarily, internal security covers the issues relating to internal political conflict, conflict based on religion, ethnicity, caste, white- and blue-collar crimes.

The fact that Nepal shares an open border with India exposes the threat that comes with an open border. Similarly, various political and administrative changes; increasing crime rates; inability to address the post-conflict scenario, post-disaster situations, non-adherence to rule of law, democracy, ineffectiveness in the protection of human rights, ineffective public service delivery, and political instability are major to pose threat to our national security.

Provisions of National Security in Nepal

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 in Article 50 (4) has provisioned to adopt an independent foreign policy based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of Panchsheel, international law and the norms of world peace, the overall interest of the nation, also taking into consideration the necessity to safeguard the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national interest of Nepal (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p. 23). Article

268 of the Constitution has also provisioned the National Security Council, Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and National Investigation Department as the institutions of national security of Nepal (*The Constitution of Nepal, 2015*, p. 157).

Certain specialized acts, including Nepal Police Act, 2012 (1955); Arms and Ammunition Act, 2019 (1962); Local Administration Act, 2028 (1971); Armed Police Force Act, 2058 (2001); Army Act, 2063 (2006); Prevention of Organized Crime Act, 2069 (2013), Muluki Criminal Code, 2074 (2017) have been enacted to address various issues that are directly or indirectly related to national security. These laws contribute to the effective operation and proper regulation of security institutions and also to qualify them enough to handle the challenges that threaten the national security.

Various multi-lateral and bilateral talks have been conducted to resolve border disputes, control cross-border crime, terrorist activities, human trafficking, illicit drugs, and counterfeit currency transactions, and also to show commitment and support bilateral and regional cooperation for promoting regional and national security.

COVID-19: The Scenario and the Lockdown

The virus which has frozen the world, identified as SARS-CoV-2 had its outbreak in late 2019 in China. From February 2020, COVID-19 cases soared across most of Europe, the United States, Australia, and Asia and on to Africa which happened exactly in the manner as said by Lee Jong-Wook, former Director-General of the World Health Organization; pandemics do not respect international borders (UN Chronicle, 2020, np). Until now, the novel coronavirus continues to wreak havoc on daily life around the globe, affecting 221 countries, infecting

113,095,741 people, and killing 2,508,817 people (Worldometer, 2021, np). Until this article was prepared (24 February), 273,760 people were infected and 2,684 people have died and overall, all 77 districts have been tested positive (Ministry of Health and Population, 2021, np) in Nepal. The novel coronavirus has the potential to weaken many societies, political systems, and economies (Davies, 2020, np), and the impact of the virus is also seen in the daily lives of people and the economic life of the country too.

Lockdown is considered to be an effective measure in preventing the spread of the coronavirus around the globe (Barkur, 2020, p. 51). It was presumed that even in the best-case scenario, the coronavirus vaccine development was likely to take 12-18 months (Thompson, 2020, np). With such uncertainty, the government of Nepal also declared a nationwide lockdown starting from 24th March 2020. The schools, private offices, public places, markets, temples, mosques, churches, and other places where people gather were closed. Services including transportation (via land and air) were banned (Subedi, 2020, p. 752). All government services other than essentials had been shut down (The Economic Times, 2020, np). Similarly, government offices were also closed placing officials 'alert' at their homes (Hamro Patro, 2020, np). The city's once busy places were quiet, all shutters in the market were closed, borders were closed (Karki, 2020, np) and people were asked to stay within their home unless to buy groceries and medicine while all non-essential services and manufacturing remaining closed (GardaWorld, 2020, np).

Impact of COVID-19 on National Security of Nepal

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted the countries across the world and Nepal cannot remain an exception

to it. Like others, it is exploring ways to prevent the spread and infection rate. With its impact on social, political, cultural, economic, and psychological aspects of many lives, it has also impacted on the national security of Nepal. This paper in its further discussion will briefly touch upon political security, economic security, human security, environmental security, homeland security, and energy and natural resource security. However, an extensive discussion will be made in terms of cyber security taking into consideration the increasing online-based work from home trend in the country.

Once the government declared a nationwide lockdown, the government kept on extending it without addressing the need for daily wage workers. The news of many people leaving to their original place, on foot, with bundles of their belongings started to pop out. Tens of thousands of people returned home from India, many of them even swam across the Mahakali to enter the nation. People lost their savings and their livelihood remained at risk. Amidst this, the government activities were protested by youths blaming the government for being corrupt and having *malafide* intention behind providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Rapid Detective Test (RDT), Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test and in managing quarantine facilities and diet to the patient of coronavirus. The movement was against apathy, poor service delivery, corruption, incompetence, and failure to address the subsistence issues of the citizen. Continuation of these activities may frustrate people resulting in the mass discontent and the fragile political system of Nepal.

The closure of national and international flights stopped the movement of people bracketing many ready-to-go migrant workers in the country. COVID-19 left thousands of migrant workers jobless and without remittance that created difficulties to sustain

their families. Businesses were shut down leaving the rental payment and repayment of loans as a huge burden of people. The government also failed to provide opportunity and protection for migrant workers who were seeking to return to the country after losing jobs in foreign countries. This has widened the gap between rich and poor, resulting in economic inequality, poverty and with a possible chance to promote criminal activities harming the peace and order of society which is most likely to destabilize the country.

Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and Armed Police Force were supposed to protect the national frontiers, investigate crime, protect national sovereignty and maintain peace in the society. These supposed roles were diverted due to the pandemic created by the coronavirus. Almost 51,000 police personnel of the Nepal Police (NP) and 29,000 of the Armed Police Force (APF) were deployed across 77 districts to prevent and control the COVID-19 spread and management of isolation and quarantine centers set up (The Rising Nepal, 2020, np). Nepal Army also started to treat COVID-19 patients from its hospitals (The Himalayan Times, 2020, np). Birendra Military Hospital, Chhauni, in Kathmandu has the facility of a 100-bed isolation ward, including 30 ICU high care beds prepared under the chairmanship of the Nepal Army Headquarters (Spotlight, 2020, np). These facilities were for treating suspected coronavirus patients and those found positive. The Ministry of Health and Population has converted Armed Police Force's Balambu-based hospital as an anti-coronavirus dedicated facility (The Rising Nepal, 2020, np). The priority of national security institutions changed because of which many criminal cases went unreported and uninvestigated. For instance, COVID-19 induced restrictions and confinement of women and young girls in their homes has increased the risk of domestic violence (Minakshi Dahal, 2020, p. 2).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is also seen on energy and natural resources security. The construction process of many hydropower's' and other development projects stopped pushing back their operation dates. Food security, improper utilization of resources, proper and enough protection of biodiversity, access to water started to become an issue for the public. Most importantly, floods and the disaster during the rainy season compelled people to be in a group which increased the spread of COVID-19. The impact of floods such as loss of housing, damage to critical infrastructure including health facilities assembled sheltering and the contaminated water further worsened the socio-economic conditions of the community.

The coronavirus pandemic hit human security by posing harmful disruption on the daily life of people. The safety from hunger, the right to movement, special care to persons with disabilities, children, and senior citizens were compromised. The detention centers and prisons became a hub to spread the virus, the number of gender-based violence, domestic violence, rape, and incest kept on increasing, concerns of migrant workers were left unattended by both the host and destination countries. The old aged people were after the journalists and diplomats in the priorities of government to vaccinate against the coronavirus. This manifests that the access to vaccines for all people in a short period is still a daydream. Rather the dissolution of the parliament by the prime minister, strikes, political assembling, different ongoing cases in the Supreme Court, and the recent order of the Supreme Court to reinstate the parliament have taken precedence over the lives of people.

Besides, the worldwide lockdown resulted in the reduction of air, noise, and water pollution. However, sewage collection became a serious problem too. For a country like ours that

has limited resources and capacity to deal with climate change issues, the COVID-19 pandemic makes it even vulnerable to various climatic impacts including erratic rainfall, drought floods, and extreme temperatures.

Cyber security: A Major Concern

An estimated 4.66 billion people use the internet in the world today (Johnson, 2021, np). The dependency on the internet, information, and communication technology changes with the change in the way we live and conduct our businesses.

Nepal is also using the internet and information and communication technology expeditiously. As of January 2020, the number of populations using the internet was 12.21 million (Kemp, 2020, np). The government of Nepal has started e-governance initiatives to make all governments accessible, efficient and transparent (DOIT, np) and to establish good governance that is guided by the e-Government Master Plan. The use of the internet and devices is not only limited to business or government business affairs but also extended to the daily lives of people.

The use of ICT in the globe and Nepal has increased more during the COVID-19 pandemic with the increase in the number of employees to work from home. Due to the high risk of COVID-19, private offices including IT companies, I/NGOs have asked their employees to work from home. Governments across the world have also encouraged employers to allow working from home as a means to further physical distancing (ILO, 2020, p. 1) and to contain the spread of COVID-19. Work from home became the only option to keep the economy alive while at the same time preventing the public health crisis.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, internet usage has risen by 70%, (Beech,

2020, np) the use of communication apps has doubled, (Ali, 2020, Para.1, np). Similarly, the use of the internet and technology can be found anywhere after the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nepal too. Schools are providing online education, people are working from home, the corporate houses are performing their job online, the groceries and lunch are delivered at home on the use of an app, bills are paid online, the means of transportation are booked online, the seminars and events are happening through video conferencing and others. The government has recently launched an app called 'Nagarik App' from where people can receive services from 40 government authorities (The Himalayan Times, 2021). People are supposed to register their phone number and citizenship number to receive services from this app. They are asked to make entry of their personal information to receive e-services from private and public institutions. Though the government highlighted the time-saving aspect of service seekers and transparency, it fails to address the security mechanisms of this app and ensure people about the security of their data leaving people a vacuum-like.

The growth in the use of the internet, computer, and other devices amongst people has, on the one hand, enhanced the efficiency, effectiveness, and capacity of individuals and institutions whereas on the other hand, the opportunities created in cyberspace have posed threat resulting to the commission of the crime. Subject-matters that were once under the national jurisdictions, i.e., political conversations, trade, commerce, social lives, and national security considerations are now migrating to the scope of ungoverned digital spaces. Despite its multiple benefits, the online/cyberspace provokes criminal activities, such as hijacking, spamming, phishing and cybercrimes.

Cyberspace can be so expansive that it could harm entire nations (Iramdoost, 2018, p. 1). More importantly, cybercrime is a global phenomenon that does not have any territorial barriers or jurisdictional restrictions. The Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community (2016) has put 'Cyber and Technology' in the top list of prominent threats, keeping other conventional threats at the bottom of the list. The report also claims that the alarming development of cyber and technology demands significant attention. Since cybercrime can be committed being domiciled in any part of the world, it is even more challenging to address the issue.

Previously the trend of cybercrime in Nepal was limited to email blackmail, SMS blackmail, illicit publication in the online world, data piracy etc. But now unauthorized access to data, online illegal activities, phishing, online fraud, online sale of counterfeit products, website hijacking, and others are being added to the list. Chapter 9 of the Electronic Transaction Act, 2063 introduced cybercrimes in Nepal as to pirate, destroy or alter computer source code, unauthorized access in computer materials, damage to any computer and information system, the publication of illegal materials in electronic form, to disclose confidentiality, to commit computer fraud, abetment to commit computer-related offense and accomplice of offense (Electronic Transaction Act, 2063, p. 24-27). However, the increase in the number of online businesses, rise in perpetrators, lack of precautionary measures in using information and communication technologies, the lack of cyber forensic and ineffective investigative measures has given birth too many other criminal acts. The news about Chinese hackers- who hacked 68 ATM booths and stole approximately 18.9 million of 17 commercial banks of Nepal and about the group of Nepali hackers named 'Anonymous opnep' who claimed to have

breached into the server of Nepal Telecom (Maskey, 2016, np) shows how fragile is the cyber security in our country.

Cyber security in the wake of the pandemic was cited as the third major risk (World Economic Forum, 2020, p. 10). “Cyber security is the application of technologies, processes, and controls to protect systems, networks, programs, devices, and data from cyber-attacks (IT Governance, 2016, np).” The formation of a new dataset through the integration of biological worlds and digital worlds of humans could result in creating a new battlefield (Saran, 2020, p. 25). UN has warned about the rise of cybercrime, with a 600% increase in malicious emails during the pandemic situation (The Himalayan Times, 2020).

In Nepal, six complaints a day on an average were filed since the lockdown in the Cyber Bureau of Nepal Police. They were mostly related to the spread of misinformation, identity theft, harassment through social media, and defamation (The Kathmandu Post, 2020). This happened due to unfamiliarity with cyber security, inability to maintain privacy and inability to distinguish which information should be shared and which not and also the use of pirated software. The Electronic Transaction Act, 2064 (2007) is the major law to regulate activities related to cyberspace. However, the arrest of VTEN, Samir Ghising and Bhim Upadhyaya on the grounds of their derogatory remarks against the Nepal Police and Government of Nepal in cybercrime and later releasing them on the ground that no genuine reason exists to arrest them shows the gap in the legal system. The law that deals with the regulation of the use of information communication and technology keeps on changing every day was enacted more than a decade ago and has not undergone any amendments yet. That shows how inefficient is our law to address

the changing elements of online space. Similarly, several webinars conducted during the lockdown were spammed by spammers and are left without any action against it. People spam and take the fun out of it but we have no regulatory mechanism for such action. This also shows that our government has weak structures and regulations coupled with a lack of skilled specialists in cyber security.

Least developed countries like Nepal are not facing much risk when compared to the developed countries. However, if timely action is not taken, the exposition to the threat could result in a situation where we will be left without any clue to handle the consequences of such. The number of people using the internet is increasing but the government’s effort to protect people, data devices, and infrastructures of the internet from cybercriminals have not matched with the dynamics of the rapidly growing cyber world. The threat of cybercrime is still likely to grow in coming years if the government continues to lack expertise on how to secure IT systems and to understand the true extent of the threats. Such a threat will not limit to individual lives but also the nation as a whole. The gravity of hijacking an individual account may not amount to challenge national security but hijacking a government website certainly does. Therefore, the uncertain future could lead to an out-of-control situation resulting in a greater loss if the action on a micro-level is not regulated on time.

Conclusion

The Government of Nepal does not have updated relevant laws to address the emerging cyber issues. It also remains without designated expertise both on how to secure their IT systems and to understand the true extent of the threats. Some threats may be much more substantial than government

officials may anticipate, such as their vulnerability to e-government website hacks. Other threats that are difficult to quantify due to animosity and ambiguity may lead to a heightened fear of the unknown impact on social, economic, and cultural aspects of people's lives. Cybercrime is not something that runs on its own but is impacted due to and by other aspects of human lives. Therefore, online systems are needed to be made visible in the planning or strategy of national security. The skills and capabilities of government officials should be enhanced to make them able to deal with the emerging cyber issues. The cyber resiliency should be built either through the initiation of government or in cooperation with private institutions to make the cyber governance stronger.

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