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Internal Migration in Nepal and Its Implications on Social Harmony

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Abstract

The internal migration in Nepal has changed the socio-cultural structure as well as the political demography of Nepal, which has affected communal harmony in Nepali society. The internal migration has diversified Nepali society, and the people of different communities have been sharing common social and cultural values among each other. On the other hand, there are also some implications for social harmony because of internal migration in Nepal. The article is particularly focused on analyzing the implication on social harmony due to internal migration and demographic change. The National Census 2021 indicates that the people of the hills have been continuously migrating towards the Terai region, which has increased the population in Terai, and the population of the hills is rapidly vacating. This internal migration from hill to Terai has brought regional imbalances and increased the vulnerability of social division in Nepali society. The study follows quantitative as well as qualitative methodology. The primary data were collected from the field study in Ramban and Nagaul villages of the Bara district. The paper analyzes the data of the national census of 2011 and 2021 to study the internal migration from hill to Terai. The study has found that internal migration has increased population imbalance and criminal activities. It also found that a diversified society is more vulnerable to political exploitation and ethnic and communal clashes, which ultimately threaten social harmony. This article alerts the policymakers regarding the continuous migration from the hill to the Terai region and its implications on social harmony. The demographic change in Nepal due to internal migration has added the challenge of maintaining social harmony between migrated hill origin people and Madhesi natives.

Keywords: *Internal migration, national census, communal conflict, social harmony, demographic change*

Introduction

“As we encounter each other, we see our diversity - of background, race, ethnicity, belief – and how we handle that diversity will have much to say about whether we will in the end be able to rise successfully to the great challenges we face today.”- Dan Smith, The State of the World Atlas

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International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a “migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of the person’s legal status, whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary, what the causes for the movement are, or what the length of the stay is.” Internal migration is defined as the migration of the people within the national boundary. It is a human migration within the political boundary of the same nation for the sake of better opportunities, whether it is economic, educational, or for better physical security, and it is directly associated with the change of the place of origin (Rees, 2002).

Analyzing the history of internal migration in Nepal, it can be categorized into three main waves. The first wave occurred during the unification period of King Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors, marked by the use of Jhara labor. The second wave began in the 1950s with national resettlement policies aimed at increasing agricultural production in the Terai, through projects like the Rapti Valley Development Project (RVDP) and the Nepal Resettlement Company (Shrestha, 1990). The introduction of democracy after the 1950s accelerated the socio-economic transformation of Nepali society, creating various employment opportunities in the Terai. This economic shift attracted significant internal migration, which is considered the third wave of internal migration in Nepal (Suwal, 2014).

The internal migration in Nepal has changed the socio-cultural structure as well as the political demography of Nepal. The National Census 2021 shows that the people of the hill region are continuously migrating towards the plain region. The hill to Teri migration seems higher than rural to urban migration (National Statistics Office, 2023). The internal migration has been changing the demography of Nepal in a distinct way. There is no such geography where the people of only one community live solitarily in the present context. The internal migration has diversified Nepali society. The huge influx of migrated people from the hill districts of Lumbini provinces has increased population density in Butwal (Sharma, 2024). Terai The possibility of political exploitation with the regional and identity sentiments of the diversified society seems higher. Some security challenges have surfaced on maintaining social harmony in the present situation in Terai (Pokhrel, 2024).

The possibility of religious exploitation through communal violence also exists in a diversified society formed after migration. The minority population is politically, socially, and economically vulnerable in the heterogeneous society formed by the inclusion of internally migrated people. The internal migration has a direct linkage with the social harmony among the people of different origins, cultures, traditions, and ideologies residing in the same geography. Communal violence and ethnic clashes weaken the social harmony among the people. The social deprivation and exclusion of the migrated minority also lead towards social disharmony, which finally threatens the existing social harmony as well as national security. The demographic change in Nepal due to internal migration has added the challenge of maintaining social harmony between migrated hill-origin people and Madhesi natives. The article is particularly focused on analyzing the implication on social harmony due to internal migration and demographic change in Nepal.

Review of Literature

The report '*Rastriya Janaganana 2078 Sanxipta Natija*' published by the National Statistics Office is considered a main source of secondary data required for the study of changes in the population in the hills and Terai. The report is also used to study the districts of hills with lower populations and the districts with higher populations in Terai. Similarly, the report is used for the quantitative analysis of the number of households, the population of Nepal, the migration of Nepal, and population growth by geographical area. The report '*Rastriya Janaganana 2078 Sanxipta Natija*' is considered a primary source of data required for the quantitative analysis on the study of hill to Terai migration.

Dr. Bhim Raj Suwal's article entitled '*Internal Migration in Nepal*' published in 'Population Monograph of Nepal Volume I' by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2014 mentions the trends and patterns of internal migration in Nepal. The article helps to understand the influx of migrated people from the districts of hills to Terai by presenting the data on net in-migration and net out-migration from hills to Terai. Dr. Suwal's article proves that Terai is the greatest gainer and hills are the greatest loses is correct of the population in Nepal. The article helps to study hill-to-Terai migration in Nepal.

Rajendra Khadka's article entitled '*City-centric migration and security concern in Nepal*' published in Journal of APF Command and Staff College Vol 2 No. 1 in 2019 is reviewed to analyze the security concern due to city-centric internal migration in Nepal. The data used by the article is also used as secondary to analyze the population changes in hills and Terai. The article helps to identify the linkage between internal migration and law and order concern and social harmony (Khadka, 2019).

The report entitled '*Birtamod Ra Itaharima Badyo Chap, Purbi Pahadko Gaon Rittidai*' published in Online Khabar by Hari Adhikari on 11 Oct 2024 is reviewed to understand the internal migration trend from hill to Terai and to analyze how the districts of hills are vacating. It is also helpful to analyze the massive influx of hill people to Terai during times of insurgency because of security. Another article entitled '*Tibra Basaisarai, Manda Samajik Ebam Rajnaitik Bikas*' published in Online Khabar by Sanjeev Humagain, Ph.D., is reviewed to understand the social and political impact due to rapid internal migration in Nepal. The report entitled '*Pahadi Palika Ma Manxe Rokney Karyakram: Ghar, Duhunu Gai Ra Eak Lakh Nagad.*' Published in Online Khabar by Amrit Chimariya on 15 Oct 2024, it is reviewed to study the programs conducted by local authorities to contain the population as well as to retain the population on hills from Terai.

A book named '*Himalpariko Huri*' by Sudheer Sharma is reviewed to understand the measures of maintaining regional balance of population. Mr. Sharma mentions China's "Go West policy" to maintain regional balance on population in China. This policy also seems helpful to maintain the population in the hills and mountains of Nepal.

The article entitled '*Social harmony in India: some examples,*' written by Ram Sharan Tiwari in his blogspot on 5 July 2014, is reviewed to understand the factors affecting social harmony in India. The article also helps to identify the factors affecting social harmony in Nepal because of various commonalities between Indian and Nepali society.

Hammett mentions that social harmony emphasizes the cooperation, respect, and belongingness among the people living within specified geography for the betterment of the

whole community (Hammett, 2016). According to Laishun, “Social harmony is multi-tiered: it encompasses harmony between all ethnic groups and cultures (between the dominant culture and subcultures and between the cultures of different social classes); harmony in the sense of respect for a country or a culture; harmony between different religions; and harmony between Man and Nature” (Laishun, 2010).

The literature suggests that the people from the districts of mountains and hills have been continuously migrating towards the Terai region. The unchecked population migration from hills and mountains has been vacating the hills of Nepal. It has created regional imbalances of population in Nepal. Hammett’s definition of social harmony is used as an operational definition for the study. The literature is found successful in identifying the internal migration trend in Nepal and considers hill-to-Terai migration as an alarm of population imbalance in Nepal. However, a research gap is clearly visible in the study of the implications on social harmony due to internal migration in Nepal. The study focuses on hill-to-Terai migration in Nepal and its implications on social harmony.

Methodology

The study follows quantitative as well as qualitative methodology. The study analyzes the data from the national census of 2011 and 2021 regarding internal migration. The research on the dissertation entitled “Internal Migration Pattern of Nepal and Its Implications on Social Harmony” was initially conducted in 2017 A.D., and this article is an updated artifact of the summarized portion of the dissertation. The one hundred and twenty-two samples were collected through the field study at Ramban and Nagaul villages of the Bara district, where the hill-migrated people and Madhesi natives reside. The views and opinions of the participants were also collected through various focused group discussions (FGDs) among male and female participants of both migrants and non-migrants’ communities. The four FGDs with 7 participants were conducted among the natives and migrants in Ramban and Nagaul villages in 2017 A.D. The study has found that hill-to-Terai migration is a dominant migration pattern in Nepal. It has found the various factors affecting social harmony in the context of Nepal. The study has also analyzed the factors that have affected social harmony due to internal migration. The study also conducts content analysis on identifying the implications on social harmony in Terai due to the migration of hill people in Terai.

Internal migration in Nepal

Migration is broadly classified into internal and international migrations. International migration is further divided into emigration and immigration, whereas internal migration is divided into lifetime migration and period. The lifetime migration is further divided into inter-district, inter-regional, and inter-zonal and rural-urban streams (Suwal, 2014). Analyzing the various censuses from the year 1961 to 2021, the inter-district migration is recorded high in comparison to inter-regional and inter-zonal migration. The people in Nepal are migrating generally from rural to urban areas and from hills to the Terai region (Suwal, 2014).

The latest trend in internal migration in Nepal is the continuation of migrating people from the hills towards the Terai. It is argued that internal migration in Nepal is mainly due to regional imbalances in the distribution of resources, opportunities, services, and poverty;

unemployment; difficult livelihoods; and food scarcity of households (K.C., 2014). The 2011 census data, as well as past census data, indicate that in Nepal most internal migration occurs from hills to Terai and rural to urban areas (Suwal, 2014).

Table 1: Population Distribution by Ecological Zones

Census years	Mountain	Hill	Mountain & Hill	Terai	Total
1952/54	-	-	5349988 (64.8%)	2906637 (35.2%)	8256625
1961	-	-	5991297 (63.6%)	3421699 (36.4%)	9412996
1971	1138610 (9.9%)	6071407 (52.5%)	7210017 (62.4%)	4345966 (37.6%)	11555983
1981	1302896 (8.7%)	7163115 (47.7%)	8466011 (56.4%)	6556828 (43.6%)	15022839
1991	1443130 (7.8)	8419889 (45.5%)	9863019 (53.3%)	8628078 (46.7%)	18491097
2001	1687859 (7.3%)	10251111 (44.3%)	11938970 (51.6%)	11212453 (48.4%)	23151423
2011	1781792 (6.7%)	11394007 (43.0%)	13175799 (49.7%)	13318705 (50.3%)	26494504

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics Nepal

Table 1 illustrates that the national census from 1952/54 to 2011 shows that the population of mountains and hills is continuously declining while the population of Terai has been increasing. It shows that people have been continuously migrating from hills and mountains to the Terai region. It also signifies regional imbalance in population distribution in Nepal. The most important aspect is that the government of Nepal has paid less attention to internal migration from the hills to the Terai. Therefore, the regional imbalance of population distribution has reached an alarming stage.

Table 2: Population of Nepal by Geographical Area, National Census 2021

Geographical Region	Total Population	Population (%)
Himalaya Region	17,72,948	6.079 %
Mountain Region	1,17,57,624	40.314 %
Terai Region	1,56,34,006	53.606 %
Nepal	2,91,64,578	100 %

Source: NPHC 2021 National Report

Table 2 shows that 53.606% of the population lives only in the 17% area of the nation-Terai region, whereas 40.314% of the population resides in the hill region, which is 68% of the area of Nepal (National Statistics Office, 2023). The data indicates that hills are vacating, and the population in the Terai region has been increasing, which has brought regional imbalances. The National Census of 2021 also shows the increment in the population in Terai by 3.306%, and the hill population is decreased by 2.

Table 3: Migration of Nepal by Geographical Area, National Census 2011

Place of enumeration	Nepal				% In-Migrants
	Place of Birth				
	Mountain	Hill	Terai	Total	
Mountain	-	37,672	7,497	45,169	2.2
Hill	213,714	-	375,101	588,815	28.2
Terai	180,587	1,273,599	-	1,454,186	69.6
Total	394,301	1,311,271	382,598	2,088,170	100
% Out-Migrants	18.9	62.8	18.3	100.0	
Net Migration	-349,132	-722,456	1,071,588		

Source: *Population and Housing Census-2011 Database, CBS, 2014*

Table 3 illustrates that hills are highest on sending migrants to other zones with out-migrants at 62.8 percent and receiving 28.2 percent in-migrants. Mountain has the lowest in-migrants with 2.2 percent, whereas its out-migrant is 18.9 percent. The data proves that the population is migrating from Mountain and Hill towards Terai. Table 2 clearly shows that Terai appears to be the largest gainer of population through the migration process, the hills being the highest loser. Most migration to Terai occurs from contiguous hill regions, implying that hill migration generally has a common destination in contiguous areas of the Terai region (Suwal, 2014).

Table 4: Number of Households by Geographical Area, National Census 2021

Geographical Region	National Census 2011		National Census 2021	
	Households	Percent (%)	Households	Percent (%)
Himalaya Region	364120	6.7	4,09,799	6.1
Mountain Region	2534430	46.7	29,49,056	44.2
Tarai Region	2528752	46.6	33,08,082	49.6

Source: *Rastriya Janaganana 2078 ko Sanxipta Natija*

Table 4 shows that the number of households decreased by 0.6% in the Himalaya region and 2.5% in the mountain region, whereas it was found to have increased in the Terai region by 3%. It illustrates that the number of households is decreasing in the Himalaya and mountain regions, and Terai has been carrying the population burden in Nepal.

Table 5: Population Growth by Geographical Area, National Census 2021

Geographical Region	Population		Population Growth Rate (%)
	2011	2021	
Himalaya Region	1781792	1772948	-0.05
Mountain Region	11394007	11757624	0.30
Terai Region	13318705	15634006	1.54
Nepal	26494504	29164578	0.92

Source: *Rastriya Janaganana 2078 ko Sanxipta Natija*

Table 5 shows the comparison of the population size in the 2011 census and the 2021 census. It also explains that the Himalaya region has negative population growth, the mountain region has minimal population growth, and the Terai region has a higher population growth rate in comparison to the Himalaya and mountain regions. The continuous population increment in Terai due to internal migration and higher population growth rates is vulnerable to various social and political problems in the Terai region.

Table 6 : Five districts with lowest population growth rate, National Census 2021

Districts	Population		Population Growth Rate (%)
	2011	2021	
Ramechhap	202646	170302	-1.67
Khotang	206312	175298	-1.56
Manang	6538	5658	-1.39
Bhojpur	182459	157923	-1.39
Terhathum	101577	88731	-1.30

Source: Rastriya Janaganana 2078 ko Sanxipta Natija

Table 6 shows that the four districts of the mountain region, one of which is the Himalaya district Manang, have higher negative population growth. The data proves that the three hill districts (Khotang, Bhojpur, and Terhathum) of Koshi province, Manang of Gandaki Province, and Ramechhap of Bagmati province have higher negative population growth rates in Nepal.

Table 7: Five districts with highest population growth rate, National Census 2021

Districts	Population		Population Growth Rate (%)
	2011	2021	
Bhaktapur	304651	432132	3.35
Rupendhei	880196	1121957	2.33
Chitwan	579984	719859	2.07
Banke	491313	603194	1.97
Jhapa	812650	998054	1.97

Source: Rastriya Janaganana 2078 ko Sanxipta Natija

Table 7 shows that Bhaktapur has the highest population growth rate, and the four top districts with the highest population growth rate belong to the Terai region (National Statistics Office, 2023). The comparative analysis of Table 6 and Table 7 shows that four districts of Terai (Rupandehi, Chitwan, Banke, and Jhapa) have higher population growth, and Bhaktapur has the highest population growth rate in Nepal.

Analyzing the data form of national census 2011 and 2021, it is found that more than half of the population is residing in only 17% of the land—Terai; the number of households and population growth rate in Terai are higher. It indicates that the population in the Terai region has been increasing, which has brought regional imbalances. Hills and mountains are vacating.

The regional imbalance of the population and the high population density in the Terai region will have a severe impact on food security, political demography, and social harmony.

The population of eastern hill districts, especially Bhojpur, Sakhawasabha, Dhankuta, Khotang, and Terhathum, is continuously migrating towards the Itahari sub-metropolitan city of Sunsari district, which has now become an important economic and communication hub in eastern Nepal. The National Census 2021 shows 50,350 households in Itahari, whereas the National Census 2011 shows only 33,700 households in Itahari. It shows an increment of 16,650 households (1,665 per year) in Itahari in a decade. Similarly, the National Census 2011 shows 19,128 households, and the National Census 2021 shows 29,852 households in Birtamod, which is an increase of 10,724 households in a decade (Adhikari H., 2024). According to anthropologist Dilli Prasai, the population of eastern hill districts of the Mechi corridor, especially Taplejung, Panchthar, and Ilam, is migrating to Birtamod. The two villages, Thamkharka and Ghumantar, of Thapli village municipality-4, Udaypur, are in a state of vacancy because of migrating people to the plain region. It is found that the whole Achrya village, consisting of 11 households of the then Durdimba VDC-9 of Panchthar, migrated to the Terai region. The Odane village, consisting of 28 households of Arun village municipality-4, Bhojpur, is also found vacant, and the people are also found migrating towards Terai (Adhikari H., 2024).

The same pattern of hill to Terai migration is observed in Lumbini province. Rupandehi is receiving higher internal migration from the hill districts. The National Census 2021 shows that the population growth of the hill districts Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, and Palpa is negative, respectively, -1.23%, -1.05%, and -0.61%, whereas the population growth of Rupandehi is 2.33%. The population of six hill districts of Lumbini province is 23.5%, and the population of the remaining six Terai districts is 68.5%. The population imbalances in the province have increased various social, economic, political, and environmental problems (Sharma T., 2024). The sudden increment in the population in a particular geography and the lack of facilitating activities to build the social relations among the migrated and local natives will have a negative impact on the internal security and local political development. The hill-to-Terai migration has been rapidly taking place, whereas the social and political development in the place of destination seems very slow. Therefore, the gap in the rapid internal migration and the socio-political development is likely to bring painful political impact (Humagain, 2024).

The rapid population growth in the Terai region due to internal migration has changed the security priority as well. The security of Terai has become more complex and volatile because of more population (Pokhrel, 2024). The study has found criminal activities and transnational crime increased in Terai because of the presence of more population. It is also observed that there are secessionist activities, social disharmonies, and political polarization in Terai, and one of the root causes is linked to demographic change due to internal migration. The security organizations need to amend the security priority from hill to Terai due to rapid population growth because of hill-to-Terai migration (Pokhrel, 2024). The local authorities are found engaged in containing and retaining the population in their place of origin in the hills. The Rangsharing Village Municipality of Makwanpur, in its FY 2080/81 budget, announced a plan to provide housing for individuals relocating to the village. The Sunkoshi village municipality

of Okhaldhunga also announced financial aid of Rs. 30,000 to buy a cow to prevent migration from the village. Similarly, the Mahashila village municipality of Parbat district has announced the financial aid of Rs. 1,00,000 for six months of food supplies to its people coming back to the village (Chimariya, 2024). The main challenge to containing the population in the hill is the lack of production, the access of hill population to the production, and the access of products to the market. The population of the hill can be contained through the investment in the tourism and agricultural industries. The hills need special policies to contain and retain their population (Adhikari C., 2024).

Sudheer Sharma, in his book “*Himalpariko Huri*,” mentions China’s ‘Go West Policy.’. China has been intensifying the economic and infrastructural development of its less populated and least developed western provinces with the aim of addressing the regional imbalance of population. The ‘Go West Policy’ of China also incorporates the Tibet autonomous region, which also provides economic opportunities in the mountainous and hilly region of Nepal. The intensified economic activities and the access to production of the hills and mountains with the Tibetan market help to contain the population on the hills and mountains of Nepal. It is also necessary to open maximum trans-Himalayan passes to ensure connectivity towards the north, which helps to increase economic activities in the hills and prevent migration as well (Sharma S., 2024).

Social Harmony

Nepal is a geographically diverse country and is divided into three different regions: mountain (15%), hill (68%), and plain (17%). The geographical diversity has also diversified the livings, cultures, and traditions of Nepal. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious country. The internal migration in Nepal has played a significant role in the diversification of Nepali society. People of different origins have been settled in the same geography, sharing cultures, customs, and emotions with each other. Though a serious impact has not been observed on the social harmony in Nepal due to internal migration, the possibility of exploitation of the situation always exists in the diversified, heterogeneous society. It is always a great challenge for a diversified nation to maintain social harmony among its people (Thapa, 2017).

It is necessary to have harmony among the various religious groups as well as harmony among the people of different cultures and ethnic groups. The caste system has also classified the populations into various caste communities. Though Nepal has various ethnic groups with diverse languages, different cultures, and traditions, the people of Nepal are living in harmony, respecting the religion, cultures, and ethnicity of each other. Therefore, unity in diversity is necessary for the maintenance of harmony in society. The sentiments and emotions of the people for the unity are essential elements of social harmony (Prabin, 2010).

Factors Affecting Social Harmony in Nepal

Ram Sharan Tiwari, an Indian professional social worker and writer, has identified the factors affecting social harmony in India. The factors affecting social harmony in India are the caste system, religious factors, regional imbalances, economic factors, terrorism, political factors, gender inequality, and illiteracy (Tiwari, 2014). The Nepali society and Indian society share some common characteristics, so the factors identified by Ram Sharan Tiwari are also applicable

in Nepali society. The factors affecting social harmony in Nepal that are determined for the field study are social involvement, political inclusion, intercommunity marriage, cultural respect, and communal conflict. These five variables are used to measure harmony in society (Thapa, 2017).

Results

The field survey of 2017 shows that the respondents who want to perform social functions through the participation of both the Hill community and the Terai community is 90 percent, 85 percent play sports among the people of different communities, seventy-three percent of people are enjoying good relationships with their neighbors, and seventy-three percent of respondents want to live in the joint community where the people of different communities live (Thapa, 2017). It proves better social involvement between the migrated and local natives in Ramban and Nagaul villages. The 71 percent jointly celebrates their festivals among the people of hill origin and the Madhesi community. The participant and a local political leader of Nagaul village during the FGD mentioned that the people of both communities are celebrating Chhath jointly, and it has become the main festival of Madhesh province, which has played a vital role in the development of brotherhood among the people of various communities (Thapa, 2017).

Table 8 Association of migrated people wants to live in society and security challenges after migration

Types of Society	Impact on Individual and Communal Security After Migration		Chi-Square Test	*P Value
	Yes	NO		
Single Community	17	15	8.142	0.00
Joint Community	23	67		
Total	40	82		

*Pearson Chi-Square Source: Field survey 2017

Table 8 represents the association of migrated people who want to live in society and individual and communal security challenges after migration. There is a strong, significant association between the migrated society and the individual and communal security after migration. The Chi-square test is 8.142 with a Pearson value less than 0.00 (Thapa, 2017).

Table 9: Distribution of the respondents by the impact on communal security after migration

Impact on communal security after migration	Frequency				Total	
	Migrants		Non-Migrants		Percent	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Yes	20	32.8	12	19.7	32	26.2
No	41	67.2	49	80.3	90	73.8
Total	61	100	61	100	122	100

Source: Field survey 2017

Table 9 shows that twenty-six percent of respondents mentioned that there is an impact on communal security after migration, whereas seventy-three percent of respondents replied that there is not any impact on communal security after migration. One of the male participants of the FGD at Ramban village mentioned that the vested interest of an individual and party has voided the situation and disturbed the harmony among the people. The social disharmony has directly affected the security of the community. The hill community people couldn't feel secure during the Madhesh agitation and Pahadiya Lakheta action (Thapa, 2017).

The study has identified that more involvement of both communities (migrated and local natives) in social and developmental activities reinforces social harmony. The political inclusion and representation of migrated and local natives is also of prime importance for strengthening the harmony. The inter-community marriages and cultural respect for each other's traditions bring the two different communities closer, which helps to enhance the harmony. However, the study finds that the internally migrated people from hills and mountains to the Terai region are living in cordial relationships and respecting each other's culture and traditions; the vested interest of an individual and political party can void the situation and disturb the harmony among the hill-migrated people and local natives in Terai (Thapa, 2017).

The study is particularly focused on demographic change due to internal migration from the hills to the Terai region and its implications on social harmony. The major findings of the research are mentioned below.

Population Imbalance

The internal migration from hills to Terai has intensified regional population imbalances in Nepal. The hills and mountains are vacating, and a huge influx of the population in Terai has brought demographic changes in Nepal that will have severe social, economic, political, environmental, and security impacts (Adhikari H., 2024).

Increment in Criminal activities

The study also shows that criminal activities have increased in Terai due to the presence of a huge population. The research also shows the increment in transnational crime in Terai. The existing open border system between India and Nepal is likely to be severely impacted due to the huge population and the increased criminal activities in Terai (Pokhrel, 2024).

Political Exploitation

The study finds that heterogeneous societies with various communities are always vulnerable to political exploitation by the vested political parties and political leaders. The recent demonstrations in the provincial name of Koshi province, the religious incident of Nepalgunj and Dharan, the Tikapur incident of 2015, the Madhesh agitation, and the economic blockade of Kathmandu in 2016 are a few incidents of political exploitation.

Ethnic and Communal Clashes

The study has found few incidents of communal clashes in Terai due to heterogeneity and migration from hills to Terai. The Tikapur incident of 2015, a threat for the displacement of hill-origin people from Terai by armed Madheshi groups in 2012 (Mahato, 2012), the identity

politics surfaced in Koshi province in the present, and C.K. Raut's secessionist movement before joining the political mainstream are observed as ethnic and communal disputes and clashes in Nepali society.

Social Disharmony

The probability of political exploitation is always found higher in a heterogeneous society. Communal and ethnic clashes are more likely to erupt in a multi communal society formed due to the internal migration. The social deprivation and exclusion of the migrated minority leads towards ethno-communal conflicts which finally threatens the existing social harmony and national security.

Recommendations

The research has made significant recommendations to the following stakeholders.

Government of Nepal

The Government of Nepal should introduce an effective policy to enhance economic activities through the production and access of the hill products to the market to contain the population in hills and mountains. The government at all levels should introduce strategies to bring back the population in the hills and Terai. The Government of Nepal should be able to grab the opportunity of the 'Go West Policy' of China to contain the hills and mountain population.

Security Organizations

The security organizations of Nepal should change their security priorities, focusing on the huge population of Terai. The security organizations should have updated security strategies to address the internal threats, transnational crimes, and high probability of political exploitation and communal and ethnic clashes due to the heterogeneous society formed by internal migration

National Planning Commission

The National Planning Commission of Nepal should prioritize the economic activities in mountains and hills to strengthen the economic activities and living standards of the hill people to prevent hills- to- Terai migration. The focus on North-South connectivity and the industrial and infrastructural development in hills and mountains could contain the population in hills and mountains.

Conclusion

The national census shows that people from mountains and hills have been continuously migrating towards Terai, and the hill-Terai migration trend is rising progressively. It has intensified the regional imbalance of population between the hills and the Terai region. The internal migration in Nepal has changed the socio-cultural structure as well as the political demography of Nepal. There is no such geography where the people of only one community live solitarily in the present context. The recent demonstrations on the provincial name of Koshi province, the religious incident of Nepalgunj and Dharan, the Tikapur incident of 2015, the Madhesh agitation, and the economic blockade of Kathmandu in 2016, politically motivated separatist events, have sown the seed of social disharmony in Nepali society. The possibility of religious exploitation through communal violence also exists in diversified Nepali society.

The vested political interest of an individual is likely to exploit the diversified society formed after migration. It is necessary to introduce policies at local, regional, and national levels to contain the population in hills and mountains. The demographic change in Nepal due to internal migration has added the challenge of maintaining social harmony between migrated hill origin people and Madhesi natives.

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