

TIBETAN REFUGEE AND IMPACT ON INTERNAL SECURITY OF NEPAL



A Thesis

**Submitted to APF Command and Staff College,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Tribhuvan University,
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For Master Degree in
Security, Development and Peace Studies**

Submitted By

BASHUDEV MAHAT

9th Batch (2080-082)

Roll No: 123740039

TU Regd. No: 6-1-40-1362-97

**APF Command and Staff College
Sanogaucharan, Kathmandu, Nepal**

April 2025

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DECLARATION

I, BASHUDEV MAHAT, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled **TIBETAN REFUGEE AND IMPACT ON INTERNAL SECURITY OF NEPAL** submitted to the APF Command and Staff College, is my original work, conducted under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Govind Prasad Kusum, Secretary, Government of Nepal (Retd.). I have duly acknowledged all sources of ideas and information referenced in the preparation of this paper. Likewise, I confirm that the findings of this thesis have not been previously presented or submitted for any academic degree or any other purpose. I also affirm that no part of this thesis has been published in any form before. If any evidence contradicting this declaration is found, I accept full responsibility.

.....

Bashudev Mahat

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

This is to certify that the thesis titled **TIBETAN REFUGEE AND IMPACT ON INTERNAL SECURITY OF NEPAL** has been prepared by BASHUDEV MAHAT under my supervision.

I hereby recommend it in partial fulfillments of the requirement for the Master's Degree in Security, Development and Peace Studies Tribhuvan University. Therefore, I recommend this thesis for final evaluation and approval.

.....

Dr. Govind Prasad Kusum

Thesis Supervisor

Date: April 2025



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LETTER OF APPROVAL

This thesis titled **TIBETAN REFUGEE AND IMPACT ON INTERNAL SECURITY OF NEPAL** submitted by BASHUDEV MAHAT to the APF Command and Staff College, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Security, Development and Peace Studies, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Evaluation Committee.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Thesis, titled TIBETAN REFUGEE AND IMPACT ON INTERNAL SECURITY OF NEPAL has been developed through consultations with Tibetan refugees, security experts and other relevant individuals from various districts. The data for this study was gathered through primary fieldwork and supplemented with secondary sources, including books, research papers, publications and websites.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and deep gratitude to the professor, commandant, chief instructor, academic program coordinator and directing staff of APF Command and Staff College for their invaluable knowledge, guidance and support in providing essential information throughout this research.

My deepest gratitude goes to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Govinda Prasad Kusum along with Associate Prof. Tikaram Gautam for their dedicated supervision and constructive feedback while preparing this thesis. Their continuous support and insightful suggestions were vital in successfully completing this study. I am also profoundly grateful to Commandant DIG Anjani Kumar Pokharel for his outstanding guidance, support and assistance as well as for creating a conducive environment that greatly facilitated the completion of this thesis. Similarly I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Ramesh Raj Kunwar for his endless guidance and creative feedback while preparing this thesis.

Similarly, I am indebted to all faculty members, the library management team and the administrative staff of APF Command and Staff College for their invaluable support. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to SP Yadav Bishwakarma, SP Suresh Sapkota and all instructors for their assistance. Furthermore, I am grateful to the other key individuals who played a crucial role during my visits to different units. Their contributions were essential to the successful completion of this study.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my parents and my spouse for their unwavering support and encouragement during this times. Their motivation and understanding made this accomplishment possible.

Bashudev Mahat
April 2025

ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between Tibetan refugees and impact on internal security of Nepal, shedding light on the intersection of humanitarian concerns, security and geopolitical dynamics. Despite not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, Nepal hosts approximately 13,645 Tibetan refugees, whose presence is marked by legal uncertainty due to the lack of formal refugee policies. The study's objectives are threefold: to assess the current status of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, to identify the internal security impact arising from their presence and to explore the measures to strengthen internal security. Employing a qualitative research design, the study gathered primary data through interviews with Tibetan refugees, Local inhabitants, key informant interviews with government officials and focus group discussions involving District Security Committees. Likewise, secondary data from UNHCR reports, government publications and academic literatures provided a broader context for the findings. The study reveals that, due to the absence of legal recognition, many Tibetan refugees face restrictions in accessing education, employment and financial services, leading to frustration and marginalization among the refugee population. This legal void has also created vulnerabilities that have, in some cases, resulted in criminal activities, such as document forgery, gold smuggling and the acquisition of fake citizenship, posing challenges to internal security of Nepal. Likewise, protests and demonstrations organized by Tibetan refugees, particularly during high-profile Chinese diplomatic visits have heightened law enforcement concerns and security alertness due to the Tibetan refugee activities. In response to these security impact, the study suggests the need for a formulation of clear legal framework, robust intelligence mechanism, strengthened border security, application of new technological advancement and improved coordination between security agencies and humanitarian organizations. Similarly, it calls for enhanced efforts to integrate Tibetan refugees by expanding their access to education, employment and legal documentation to mitigate the risk of social unrest.

Keywords: Tibetan refugee, status, threats, challenges, Security

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APF	Armed Police Force
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CDO	Chief District Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DAO	District Administration Office
DIO	Deputy Investigation Director
DPO	District Police Office
EU	European Union
FGD	Focal Group Discussion
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICRC	International Committee of Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
INGO	International Non- Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JID	Joint Investigation Director
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NA	Nepal Army
PAN	Permanent Account Number

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NP	Nepal Police
NID	National Investigation Department
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NUCRA	National Unit for Coordination of Refugee Affairs
PLA	People Liberation Army
RC	Refugee Card
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SSP	Senior superintendent of Police
SP	Superintendent of Police
UN	United Nations
USA	United State of America
UNDP	United Nation Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WPS	World Value Survey

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

A refugee is an individual who is compelled to leave their home country due to the fear of being persecuted, experiencing war, violence or other serious dangers. These individuals are unable or unwilling to return to their country because of threats to their safety, freedom or well-being. The reasons for such persecution may be related to factors such as race, religion, nationality, political views or belonging to a specific social group.

Even though, Nepal has a long history of hosting refugees, their impact on the internal security has not been thoroughly examined. Refugee issues can create social, economic and security challenges, but there is little research on how they affect internal stability. As a researcher, I want to explore this connection, understand the risks and see how the government responds. This study aims to fill that gap by looking at refugee movements, possible security threats and measures to strengthen internal security while respecting humanitarian values.

Security refers to the state of being free from danger or threat. It encompasses measures taken to protect a nation, organization, or individual from external and internal threats, including physical, digital and economic risks (Baldwin, 1997).

Internal security is the protection of a nation's stability and order by preventing threats such as terrorism, insurgency, organized crime and other internal disturbances. It involves law enforcement agencies, intelligence operations and policy measures to ensure public safety and national integrity (Chalk, 2000). By analyzing past refugee trends, potential security risks and government policies, the study uncovers key gaps and offers practical solutions.

Refugee movements have historically been driven by religious persecution, political upheaval and territorial conflicts. Before the 19th century, migration across countries was relatively unrestricted but persecution forced entire groups to flee (Betts, 2013). Notable examples include the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 and the exodus of Huguenots from France in 1685 (Marrus, 1985). The 19th century saw the emergence of fixed borders, making migration more challenging. In the early 20th century, large-scale displacements occurred due to war and

political turmoil such as the Armenian genocide (1915–1923), the Russian Revolution (1917–1921) and the Nazi-era expulsion of Jews in the 1930s (Dwork & Van Pelt, 2002).

The aftermath of World War II created massive refugee movements, including the forced relocation of 12 million ethnic Germans in 1945 and the displacement of 18 million people during the 1947 partition of India (Gatrell, 2013). The establishment of international refugee organizations such as the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees in 1921 and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950, aimed to provide protection and support for displaced populations (Loescher, 2001).

The Cold War and decolonization in the mid-to-late 20th century continued to produce refugee crises. The partition of Palestine in 1948 led to a mass exodus of Palestinian Arabs, while the Communist takeover of China in 1949 forced over 2 million people to flee to Taiwan and Hong Kong (UNHCR, 2000). The conflicts such as the Korean War (1950–1953), the Hungarian Revolution (1956) and the Cuban Revolution (1959) contributed to further displacement (Gatrell, 2013). The late 20th century saw large-scale refugee movements in Africa and Asia, particularly following the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. As political conflicts, territorial disputes and humanitarian crises continue refugee movements remain a significant global challenge.

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are compelled to flee their countries of origin because they have a justifiable fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, political views or affiliation with a certain social group (UNHCR, 2022). They leave their nations to avoid dangers like war, political persecution or ethnic conflict, in contrast to voluntary migrants. Although their main goal is to survive, the host countries face serious social, political and security consequences as a result of their relocation. Refugees may occasionally engage in illegal activities which intensifies security issues (Erdal and Oeppen, 2018).

The global refugee crisis remains one of the most persistent humanitarian challenges, with over 37.9 million refugees and more than 122.6 million forcibly displaced individuals worldwide. The crisis is fueled by conflict, persecution, climate change and human rights violations. Wars in Syria, Israel, Palestine and Ukraine have displaced millions, while ethnic persecution, such as that faced by the Rohingya in Myanmar and continues to worsen the situation. The climate change has become a major factor driving displacement, particularly in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Pacific Islands. Several nations, including Iran, Turkey,

Colombia, Germany and Uganda, host large refugee population and struggle to provide adequate resources and support (UNHCR, 2024).

As the UNHCR report, Nepal currently shelters a diverse refugee population. This includes approximately 13,645 Tibetan refugees, 6,350 Bhutanese refugees and 975 asylum seekers from various nations including Afghanistan, Myanmar and Pakistan. Nepal has a long history of offering shelter to displaced communities; however, managing this population poses considerable challenges, especially regarding resource distribution, social integration and security (UNHCR, 2024).

Nepal's role as a host country is shaped by its geographical location, political environment and economic constraints. Despite facing its own developmental hurdles, Nepal has a long history of providing reservation to refugees. Tibetan refugees began arriving after China's annexation of Tibet in the 1950s, while Bhutanese refugees, mostly of Nepali ethnicity were forced to flee in the 1990s due to ethnic persecution (Banki, 2023).

Although Nepal has a longstanding tradition of hosting displaced populations, it lacks a formal refugee policy or a comprehensive legal framework to regulate their rights and obligations. This is largely due to Nepal's non-signatory status to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which define international standards for refugee protection. The absence of a structured legal system leaves many refugees in a risky position, without clear avenues for registration, protection or integration into society. This gap makes it challenging to uphold their fundamental rights and ensure access to essential services such as education, healthcare and employment (Karki, 2016).

Bhutanese refugees, primarily of Nepali ethnicity, arrived in Nepal following Bhutan's policies of ethnic cleansing. While they share cultural and linguistic ties with Nepali citizens, they were not initially granted citizenship or full integration rights, leading to mixed public perceptions (Singh, 2013).

Tibetan refugees, on the other hand, were initially welcomed by Nepal, given the country's strategic position between India and China. However, their situation has become increasingly complicated over time. They face legal restrictions, limited employment opportunities and growing burden due to Nepal's diplomatic ties with China. The lack of legal documentation has made many Tibetan refugees vulnerable to exploitation, with some resorting to unlawful activities, such as smuggling and document forgery. These activities pose security challenges and place additional strain on Nepal's law enforcement agencies (Shrestha, 2006).

First time, the Rohingya refugees arrived in Nepal in 1996, with larger numbers coming after 2012 and a significant wave following the 2017 Myanmar military crackdown. Currently, an estimated 645 Rohingyas live in Kathmandu city area. They face numerous challenges including a lack of legal recognition, limited access to UNHCR assistance, poor living conditions and the threat of deportation (Mahat, 2020).

In Nepal, Tibetan refugees experience legal uncertainty due to the absence of official recognition and formal status which limits their access to fundamental rights, employment opportunities and essential services (Tibet Justice Center, 2016). Similarly, in India, while Tibetan refugees are provided with settlements and a certain degree of autonomy, they continue to face challenges related to property ownership, employment restrictions and limited political participation due to their non-citizen status (Hess, 2009).

The study emphasizes internal security and the identifies key risk factors such as dissatisfaction, financial stress, ideological motivations and unintentional errors that contribute to security breaches, along with behavioral indicators like unauthorized data access, irregular work patterns and non-compliance with security protocols. A significant contribution of the study is its emphasis on robust access control measures, advocating for strict access policies to limit exposure to sensitive information and reduce the risk of insider threats (Pureti, 2022).

Nepal experiences diplomatic stress from China to manage Tibetan activism and regulate related political activities. Agreements such as the Mutual Legal Assistance Act, 2019, along with strengthened border surveillance measures reflect these influences while also affecting refugee rights. Consequently, Tibetan refugees may feel marginalized, leading to concerns and a sense of discontent (Smith, 2019).

Likewise, Nepal's absence of a formal refugee policy makes it challenging to effectively address security concerns related to the refugee population. The researcher specifically focused on the five Tibetan refugee camps among the 12 designated camps across the nine different districts, particularly in the more populated and urban areas of the Kaski, Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts where the majority of refugees have occupied.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nepal faces a delicate and various challenge as a host country for refugees, particularly Tibetan refugees, whose presence involves humanitarian considerations, internal security matters and diplomatic sensitivities. The absence of a formal refugee policy has left these populations in a

precarious legal situation, making them vulnerable to exploitation and increasing the likelihood of engaging in unlawful activities such as smuggling, document forgery and political activism (UNHCR, 2021). Their uncertain status not only intensifies socio-economic adversities limiting access to education, healthcare and employment but also poses security risks, straining Nepal's law enforcement and governance capacity.

Similarly, the presence of Tibetan refugees is a politically complex issue, as Nepal's geopolitical position and adherence to the "One China Policy" require it to restrict their political activities, leading to heightened surveillance and occasional restrictions on protests and demonstrations. These tensions contribute to domestic instability and diplomatic pressures, particularly in maintaining relations with China while addressing international human rights obligations (Karki, 2016).

Internal security safeguards a nation's stability and order by addressing threats like terrorism, insurgency, organized crime and other internal disruptions. It relies on law enforcement, intelligence efforts and policy initiatives to maintain public safety and uphold national integrity. Due to the lapses of internal security, it impacts the overall stability of the nation. (Chalk, 2000).

While reviewing existing literatures, no studies were found addressing this issues. Therefore, the researcher intends to examine the current status of Tibetan refugees, identify security impacts and recommend measures to strengthen internal security of Nepal in response to the challenges of their presence and daily activities.

1.3 Research Questions

- a) What is the present status of Tibetan refugees in Nepal?
- b) How do Tibetan refugees impact the internal security of Nepal?
- c) What measures can be taken to strengthen internal security of Nepal?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- a) To assess the present status of Tibetan refugee particularly focusing on settlement, livelihood, employment, business, etc. in Nepal.
- b) To explore the impact of Tibetan Refugees on Internal Security of Nepal.
- c) To identify the measures for strengthening internal security of Nepal.

1.5 Significance of the Study

- a) This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the current situation of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, exploring their impact on the country's resources, social stability and security.
- b) It provides valuable insights into both the vulnerabilities of Tibetan refugees and the potential security risks they may present, assisting in the development of strategies for managing refugee populations.
- c) The study identifies existing security challenges and provides constructive recommendations to strengthen Nepal's internal security framework, which is beneficial for policymakers, security agencies and humanitarian organizations.
- d) It contributes to the creation of balanced policies that protect the rights of refugees while addressing security concerns, helping Nepal navigate domestic challenges while fulfilling its international commitments to refugees.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The study is based on a relatively small sample size, which may not fully capture the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders involved in Tibetan refugee affairs in Nepal. This limits the broader applicability of the findings.

This study focuses exclusively on Tibetan refugees in Nepal, excluding other refugee groups. Consequently, the findings may not be applicable to broader refugee populations or different geopolitical contexts. While secondary data from National Unit for Coordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and UNHCR Nepal have been utilized, the availability and reliability of such data may present limitations.

Similarly, some reports may be outdated or influenced by institutional perspectives, potentially affecting the objectivity of the analysis. Information collected through interviews with stakeholders may be subject to personal biases, selective memory or social desirability bias and hesitate to provide actual data which can influence the accuracy of the data. Due to the specific geographic and demographic focus of the study, the findings may not be applicable to other refugee populations, regions or different policy framework. Due to the confidentiality, there is limit to obtain security related data as well.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A systematic review is a research approach that involves identifying, critically evaluating, and synthesizing relevant studies, as well as gathering and analyzing data from those studies (Liberati et al., 2009).

A literature review is a organized overview of previously published research on a specific topics. It provides both the researcher and the audience with a comprehensive understanding of existing knowledge, including key theories, methodologies, findings and gaps in the literatures. A well-conducted literature review establishes the context for new research, demonstrating how it builds upon or challenges prior studies. It includes theoretical, empirical and policy reviews to offer a holistic perspective on the Tibetan refugees and impact on internal security of Nepal.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The theoretical review focuses on broader frameworks, principles and academic discussions that help explain the relationship between refugees and internal security. It provides general perspectives on how refugee movements influence security dynamics.

Acharya (2020) stated that in realism, rooted in the works of Morgenthau (1948) and Waltz (1979), the primary focus is on state sovereignty, power politics and national interest. Realism argues that states act primarily to preserve their security and strategic interests, often at the expense of humanitarian considerations. This theoretical framework is evident in Nepal's handling of Tibetan refugees, where the government prioritizes its diplomatic and economic relationship with China over the protection of refugee rights. In this context, Nepal's decisions reflect the realist notion that states make decisions based on their national security and geopolitical interests, rather than on humanitarian or moral imperatives.

Jacobsen (2005) explored the economic dimensions of refugee livelihoods, examining how forcibly displaced individuals adapt and develop survival strategies to make the most of available resources and opportunities despite facing significant challenges. Focusing on prolonged displacement, where refugees remain uprooted for five years or more, the study analyzed their livelihoods in refugee camps, urban areas within first-asylum countries, and

third countries accessed through resettlement or migration. Using a transnational livelihoods approach, the research considered both local and global perspectives, assessing the impact of institutional support or its absence within the refugee system. The book concluded by proposing a model for improving refugee livelihoods, appealing to a broad audience, including students, practitioners, and those interested in refugee issues.

Loescher (2002) highlighted the complex connection between human security, state security, and global stability, stressing that forced migration caused by conflict, persecution, and human rights abuses creates challenges for both refugees and host countries. Refugees often experience insecurity, harassment, and limited opportunities in first asylum nations, while their presence can contribute to inter-community tensions and regional instability. The international community, especially Western has largely neglected the root causes of refugee crises, often perceiving refugees as security risks rather than victims. Following September 11, stricter policies and anti-terrorism measures have further marginalized refugees, worsening global security concerns.

Buzan et al. (1998) stated in securitization theory, certain social or political issues are framed as security threats by state actors, shifting these issues beyond the realm of normal politics to the realm of security. This process, referred to as "securitization," involves presenting a particular issue as an existential threat to the survival or stability of the state, justifying the use of extraordinary measures to address it. Securitization theory focuses on the role of state security and how states, through political leaders or institutions, have the power to define what constitutes a threat to national security. In the context of Nepal, this theory is particularly relevant in understanding how Tibetan refugees are perceived by the government and the public. Instead of viewing Tibetan refugees through a humanitarian lens, as displaced individuals seeking asylum, the Nepal frames them as a security concern. This is largely due to the geopolitical context in which Nepal exists, with its proximity to China, which views Tibetan activism and the movement for independence as a serious threat to its sovereignty and national security.

United Nation Development Program (UNDP, 1994) introduced human security framework, shifted the focus from state-centric security to individual well-being, emphasizing economic, health, food, environmental, personal, community and political security. This approach is relevant in assessing the situation of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, who are stateless, lack legal recognition, and have limited access to basic services like education, healthcare, and employment (Amnesty International, 2021). Despite informal tolerance of their presence, the

absence of official refugee status leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and arbitrary detention (Rasul, 2018). Due to this vulnerability, it leads internal security threats.

2.2 Empirical Review

An empirical review presents research that is based on data collected through direct observation, experimentation, surveys, interviews, or case studies. These studies provide evidence and real-world findings about the phenomenon in questions.

Schwartz (2024) studied the Tashi-Palkhel Tibetan refugee camp and found that Nepal's laws and political situation create difficulties for refugees in their daily lives. He explained that these challenges make it harder for refugees to build good relationships with local communities. This situation also leads to economic difficulties and prevents refugees from fully becoming part of society.

Rigzin (2024) stated that the demographic decline of the Tibetan refugee community in South Asia, could indirectly contribute to internal security challenges for Nepal. With the shrinking population of Tibetan refugees, there could be an increased concentration of refugees from other conflict-ridden regions, potentially heightening socio-political tensions. Similarly, the strained institutions in the Tibetan refugee settlements might become more vulnerable to exploitation by criminal groups or those seeking to undermine Nepal's stability. The decrease in the Tibetan refugee population could also lead to greater competition for resources, which, in turn, could lead to heightened inter-ethnic or political tensions in Nepal, especially relationships with China and its own security concerns. The situation underscores the need for Nepal to carefully manage refugee policies, ensuring that the country's internal security is balanced with its humanitarian responsibilities.

Klein (2024) explored that the relationship between refugees and domestic violence, highlighting how host-country social attitudes and economic competition influence this connection. Using cross-national data from the World Values Survey (WVS, 1995-2014), the study tested factors that may affect internal security risks. The results revealed that social perceptions play a key role in mediating the effects of refugee inflows on domestic conflict. These findings emphasize the importance of societal attitudes toward foreigners in determining the security risks linked to refugee movements.

Jones (2023) explored the complex dynamics between Nepal, China and Tibetan refugees, examining how China's increasing influence in Nepal impacts the rights and lives of Tibetan

refugees and challenges Nepal's commitment to international human rights standards. Using a qualitative approach, the study analyzed historical events, policy shifts, and case studies, including forced repatriations, suppression of cultural activities and intensified surveillance, drawing from reports by international human rights organizations. The findings reveal that Nepal's growing economic reliance on China, particularly through investments under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has led to greater suppression of Tibetan cultural, political, and religious expression. This includes restrictions on public gatherings, denial of legal documentation, and deportation of refugees, reflecting Nepal's alignment with China's "One China Policy," which compromises its traditional role as a refuge for Tibetan exiles and its human rights obligations.

Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (2023) reported that China's growing influence has led Nepal to introduce stricter rules against Tibetan refugees. Their report showed that many refugees face close monitoring, limits on their freedom to express themselves and a lack of legal status. These factors make their lives more uncertain and difficult.

Hosen (2023) explored the long-standing presence of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and its impact on non-traditional security concerns such as environmental damage, economic instability and political and social unrest. The study highlighted how the crisis has worsened issues related to socio-economic, environmental, and personal security further complicated by internal conflicts among refugees and the involvement of extremist groups.

Minar (2021) examined the security implications of the large-scale Rohingya influx into Bangladesh from August 2017 to August 2020, focusing on whether the arrival of 1.6 million refugees posed security risks. The study analyzed four key areas: societal security, economic security, internal security, and public security. Using newspaper content analysis from the past three years and interviews with residents of Cox's Bazar in early 2019, the research assessed the frequency and perceptions of security-related incidents while ensuring interviewee anonymity. The findings showed that Bangladesh did not experience major security threats during this period. While some criminal activities were reported, they were considered low-level security concerns.

Manandhar (2021) discussed the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by Tibetan refugees in Nepal, where generations born and raised in the country continue to experience statelessness and exclusion. While earlier refugees were issued cards with limited mobility, they remain in legal limbo without citizenship or formal recognition. This denial of legal status restricts their

access to higher education, stable employment, and financial services, pushing many into informal or family-run businesses. The lack of legal identity has left young Tibetans feeling disconnected and insecure, unable to envision a future in the country they call home. To cope, many resort to using falsified documents for daily activities and travel. Human rights activists report increased surveillance, suppression of cultural expressions and arrests for displaying Tibetan flags. For young Tibetans, statelessness represents more than just a lack of legal status, it's an existential struggle to define their identity and future in a country that neither fully accepts nor recognizes them.

Ghosh (2019) examined the role of refugees as a significant non-traditional security threat, particularly in the context of political instability and conflicts that challenge the international system's ability to manage refugee flows. In South Asia, the ongoing India-Pakistan bitter relation has exacerbated this issue. Through case studies of the Bangladesh War and the Afghan War, the research explored large-scale refugee movements and the United States' role as a key external actor in both instances. In the case of Bengali refugees, the host country used the crisis to further its foreign policy goals, while in the Afghan refugee situation, the host nation leveraged it for both foreign policy and domestic political advantages. Despite these strategic actions, unintended consequences arose, highlighting the long-term importance of the refugee-security connection in security studies.

Dhondup (2018) suggested that the lack of a clear future for Tibetan refugees, combined with widespread socio-economic hardships, creates an environment in which some individuals may turn to radical political activism. He discussed the potential for Tibetan refugees to be radicalized, particularly among the younger generation, who feel disconnected from both Tibet and their host society.

Shahi (2018) examined the challenges faced by Tibetan refugees living in the Samdupling and Choejar Refugee Camps, focusing on their socio-economic conditions in Kathmandu Valley and Lalitpur. The study explored various aspects of their livelihoods, comparing the two camps to identify the social, economic, and political issues impacting them. The research primarily draws on firsthand data from household and sampling surveys, questionnaires, and interviews conducted during multiple field visits. The study concludes that government intervention is crucial to address these challenges and calls for a political and humanitarian resolution. It suggests that the government must decide whether to grant citizenship or refugee status to those lacking both, or consider third-party resettlement.

Sharma (2018) examines the security challenges linked to Tibetan refugees in Nepal, emphasizing issues such as protests, China's geopolitical influence, and the potential risks arising from political unrest within the refugee community. The study finds that these factors contribute to Nepal's delicate balancing act between upholding humanitarian commitments and maintaining diplomatic relations with China.

Karki (2016) explored that the refugee influx in Nepal, analyzing its impact on both refugee livelihoods and internal security. Employing a descriptive research design, the study focused that Tibetan refugees encountered difficulties such as identity-related issues, unemployment, health problems and restricted access to education, food and shelter. Some were also involved in unlawful activities like smuggling, producing fake documents, and participating in protests which viewed the risk to Nepal's internal security, straining its diplomatic ties with neighboring countries and international organizations. The efforts by UNHCR and IOM to resettle Tibetan refugees were recognized, emphasizing the critical need for more international support, financial aid, vocational training and resettlement programs to address the ongoing challenges faced by refugees in Nepal.

Mogire (2016) explored how refugees are perceived as security threats through practical case studies in Kenya and Tanzania, analyzing the nature, manifestations, and responses to these perceived risks. Although refugees are primarily victims of persecution and conflict, they are often regarded as contributors to insecurity. The research also examined whether these perceived threats align with or differ from other security challenges faced by host countries, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the refugee-security relationship in the region.

Sharapan (2016) looked at how Tibetan refugees try to keep their culture alive despite facing discrimination and political pressure. She found that many Tibetans rely on their spiritual beliefs and shared values to maintain their identity. However, modern influences like globalization and financial struggles make it harder for younger generations to stay connected to their traditions.

Adhikari (2015) highlighted the link between refugees' uncertain legal status and their involvement in illicit activities like smuggling and document forgery, often as a survival strategy due to a lack of formal rights and economic opportunities. Restrictive policies limit their access to employment, education, and social services, increasing their vulnerability to criminal networks. This not only exacerbates refugee hardships but also poses security risks for Nepal by straining law enforcement and diplomatic relations. Addressing this issue requires

legal reforms, vocational training, and stricter law enforcement to prevent exploitation while enabling refugees to contribute legally to the economy.

Bhattarai (2015) explored Nepal's refugee policy and its implementation, with a specific focus on Tibetan refugees. It delves into the security concerns raised by the large population of Tibetans in Nepal and how Nepal navigates the political pressures from China and the international community.

Loescher and Milner (2013) pointed out that long-term refugee populations, which make up over 70% of the world's refugees, are increasingly seen as security risks by both developing host countries and Western nations. Because refugees stay for extended periods, host governments have responded with strict policies, such as keeping them in remote and unsafe camps, blocking new refugee arrivals and in extreme cases, forcing them to return home. Some refugee camps have even become centers for terrorism and rebel activities, where militant groups take advantage of refugees to carry out actions that threaten the stability of host countries and entire regions, worsening global security issues.

Raj (2013) examined the internal security risks posed by Tibetan refugees in Nepal, particularly regarding the tensions in Nepal-China relations. Tibetan refugees, many of whom are involved in political activism can create friction with China, which sees them as a potential threat to its sovereignty. This situation results in increased monitoring and surveillance by Nepali authorities, contributing to internal security concerns.

Malla (2009) focused on social integration, identity formulation of Tibetan refugee in Nepal. He framed the challenges faced by Tibetan refugees as both psychological and social. Refugees faced a difficult transition between their Tibetan heritage and the pressures of adapting to Nepali society, which leads to identity conflict and alienation.

Dolma et al. (2006) conducted semi-structured interviews with 50 refugees at the Tibetan Refugee Transit Centre in Kathmandu to document their experiences. The participants, ranging in age from 8 to 56 years (including 21 women) took an average of 34 days to reach Nepal. Many faced encounters with authorities or Nepali Maoist groups, resulting in extortion, threats of deportation, and serious mistreatment. Some were tortured, beaten with weapons, robbed, and even threatened with execution, while three women suffered sexual assault at gunpoint. These findings reveal severe human rights violations and stress the urgent need for international action to prevent such abuses and address their lasting physical and psychological effects.

Birendra and Nagata (2006) examined how forest resources were affected by the arrival of refugees and their impact on the host community. After refugee's arrival, the demand for forest resources surged, causing deforestation and resource shortages. The local population, which had long relied on the forest for firewood, timber, fodder, and farming, now faced increased competition as refugees also depended on these resources. This study highlighted that the scarcity of resources impacted the local residence and made strain relationship among them which invited the clash and threats in the internal security.

Goodwin-Gill (2001) emphasized the international legal status of refugees, defining them as individuals who flee their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, social group membership or political opinion. This definition, central to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, establishes the legal framework for refugee protection and the obligation of states to offer asylum. He underscores that refugees are entitled to specific protections under international law, including the right to seek asylum and protection from refoulement and highlights the need for states to uphold these rights despite increasing concerns over securitization and border control.

2.3 Policy Review

Sharma (2015) stated that Nepal lacks a comprehensive legal framework for refugees, as its Constitution (2015) does not clearly address their rights and protections. Fundamental rights like the right to life and dignity (Article 16) and protection against exploitation (Article 29) apply to all individuals. Although Nepal committed to upholding international law (Article 51), it has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. This legal gap creates uncertainty, limiting refugees' access to essential rights and services but treats as host.

Nepal's legal framework, including the Foreigners Act (1958) and the Immigration Act (1992), regulates the entry, stay, and exit of foreign nationals but does not distinguish refugees from other foreigners. As a result, refugees without proper documentation are often classified as "illegal immigrants" and may face penalties, detention or deportation. The Public Security Act (1989) further allows restrictions on individuals considered security threats, including refugees. Similarly, the Extradition Act (1988) poses risks for asylum seekers, particularly Tibetans, by enabling their return to countries where they may face discrimination.

Even though, Nepal is not a signatory country in 1951 refugee convention and its protocol 1967, she treats as host to any kind of refugees in Nepal.

2.4 Research Gap

Although there is a growing body of research on refugee problems and their socio-economic and security implications, major gaps remain in understanding the specific dynamics of Tibetan refugees in Nepal and their impact to the internal security of Nepal. While studies like Klein (2024) examines the connection between refugee flows and security threats on global and regional scales, his conclusion does not directly address Nepal's unique challenges.

Research on refugee issues in South Asia, including works by Ghosh (2019) and Rigzin (2024), highlights the demographic decline of the Tibetan Refugees in south Asia and internal threats for Nepal but not sufficient study has been found. Karki (2016) offers a general discussion of refugee-related issues in Nepal; however, its descriptive approach does not fully capture the evolving security threats posed by Tibetan refugees.

Similarly, studies such as Loeschar and Minar (2013) point out that increasing refugee population create security risk globally but did not focus on Nepali perspective. Dhondup (2018) focuses on socio- economic hardships of Tibetan refugees but could not mention comprehensive internal security challenges.

Internal security safeguards a nation's stability and order by addressing threats like terrorism, insurgency, organized crime and other internal disruptions. It relies on law enforcement, intelligence efforts and policy initiatives to maintain public safety and uphold national integrity (Chalk, 2000). Due to the impacts on security, it effects overall stability of the nation.

This study's aims to explore these research gaps by examining the specific case of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, their current status, impact on internal security and potential measures for strengthening internal security of Nepal. By incorporating theoretical perspectives, stakeholder insights and empirical data, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the internal security challenges associated with refugee populations in Nepal. The findings contribute to policy development and practical solutions for strengthening security measures.

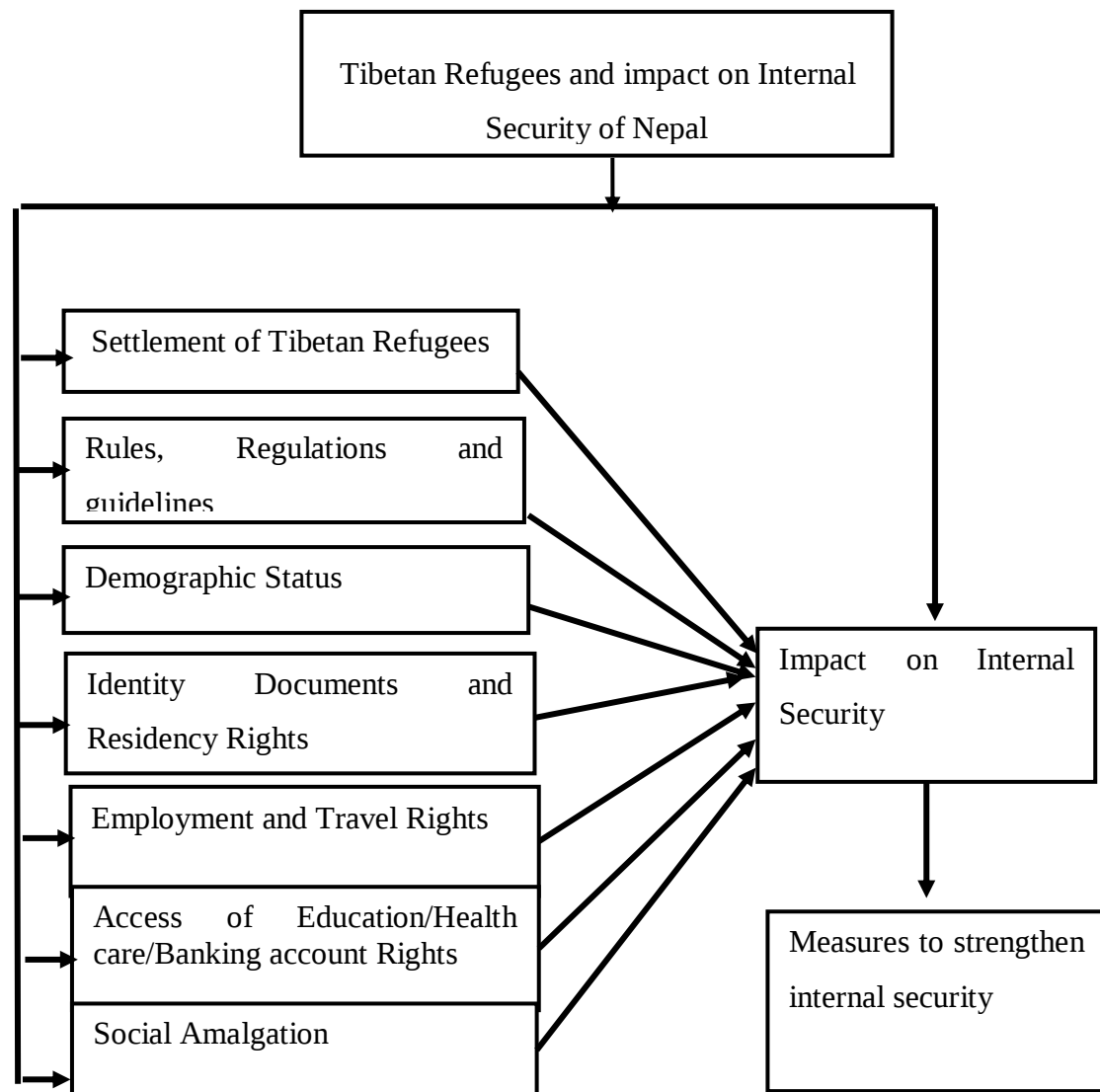
2.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides the justification for conducting a study, outlining the reasoning behind its necessity. It incorporates existing knowledge, typically presented through

a literature review, to identify gaps in understanding a particular phenomenon or issue. It establishes the methodological foundation for the research (Varpio et al., 2020).

Figure 2.5

Conceptual framework



Source: Adapted and Modified from Creswell, 2018

The researcher developed a conceptual framework as the foundation of the study, providing a structured approach by integrating relevant theories, models, and concepts from existing literatures. This framework served as a guiding tool, shaping the research inquiries, methodology and data analysis while ensuring coherence and accuracy throughout the research process. Refugee status like settlement, livelihood and access to education and healthcare are the factors which impact the internal security.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

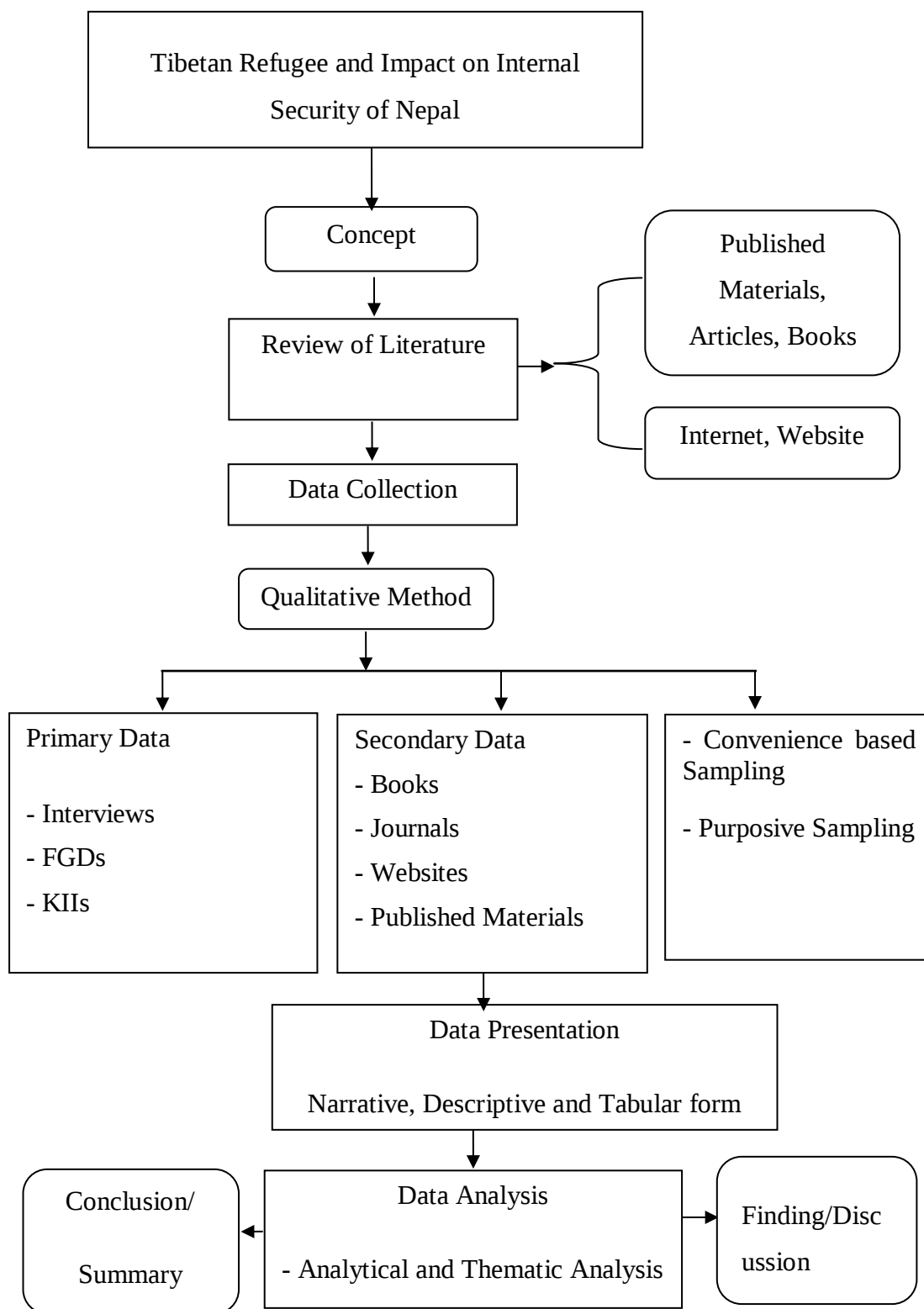
Research methodology refers to the systematic principles, strategies and procedures used to conduct a study. It encompasses the selection of research methods, data collection techniques and analytical approaches to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. Research methodology provides a structured framework for addressing research questions, guiding the choice between different approaches based on the study's objectives. It also includes ethical considerations and the justification of methods used in the research process.

This research utilized qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between refugee status and internal security in Nepal. These methods are well-suited for exploring human behaviors, perceptions, and experiences, which are central to this study. By taking this approach, the research delved into the lived experiences of refugees, the challenges faced by those responsible for maintaining internal security and the broader socio-political and security concerns associated with the presence of refugees in Nepal.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is the overall strategy that guides the collection, analysis and interpretation of data in a study. It outlines the framework for addressing research questions, ensuring the study is methodologically sound and reliable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A well-structured research design enhances the validity and accuracy of findings, making it a crucial component of any study (Saunders et. al., 2019).

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design. The researcher has chosen kaski, Lalitpur and Kathmandu where the aim is to explore and provide details analysis of Tibetan refugees. The descriptive component aimed to provide a detailed overview of the status of Tibetan refugees in Pokhara, Lalitpur and Kathmandu, while the analytical aspect focused on critically assessing the effects of their presence on local communities and internal security. Then the study explores the measures to strengthen security mechanism that combined approach offers an in-depth analysis of the findings.

Figure 3.1*Conceptual Framework*

Source: Adapted and Modified from Creswell, 2018

3.2 Sources of Data

The study employed a comprehensive approach by integrating both primary and secondary data to develop a well-rounded understanding of refugee-related issues and their impact to internal security of Nepal.

3.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data was collected through interviews with Tibetan refugees, government officials and local residents, offering valuable insights into their lived experiences, difficulties and perceptions of their current situation. Likewise, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with District Security Committees respectively kaski and Kathmandu while Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were held with government officials to assess security impact and measures to enhance security mechanisms. The study was carried out in refugee camps located in Kaski, Lalitpur and Kathmandu while field study.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

The study incorporates secondary sources to provide a broader context and support the findings from primary sources. This includes a comprehensive review of policy documents, government reports, news articles and publications from international organizations such as the UNHCR, offering insights into the legal and institutional framework surrounding refugee issues and related challenges. Likewise, relevant academic literatures were examined to explore theoretical perspectives and existing research on refugee-related matters. By integrating these diverse sources, the study aims to present a comprehensive analysis about refugee status.

3.3 Study Area

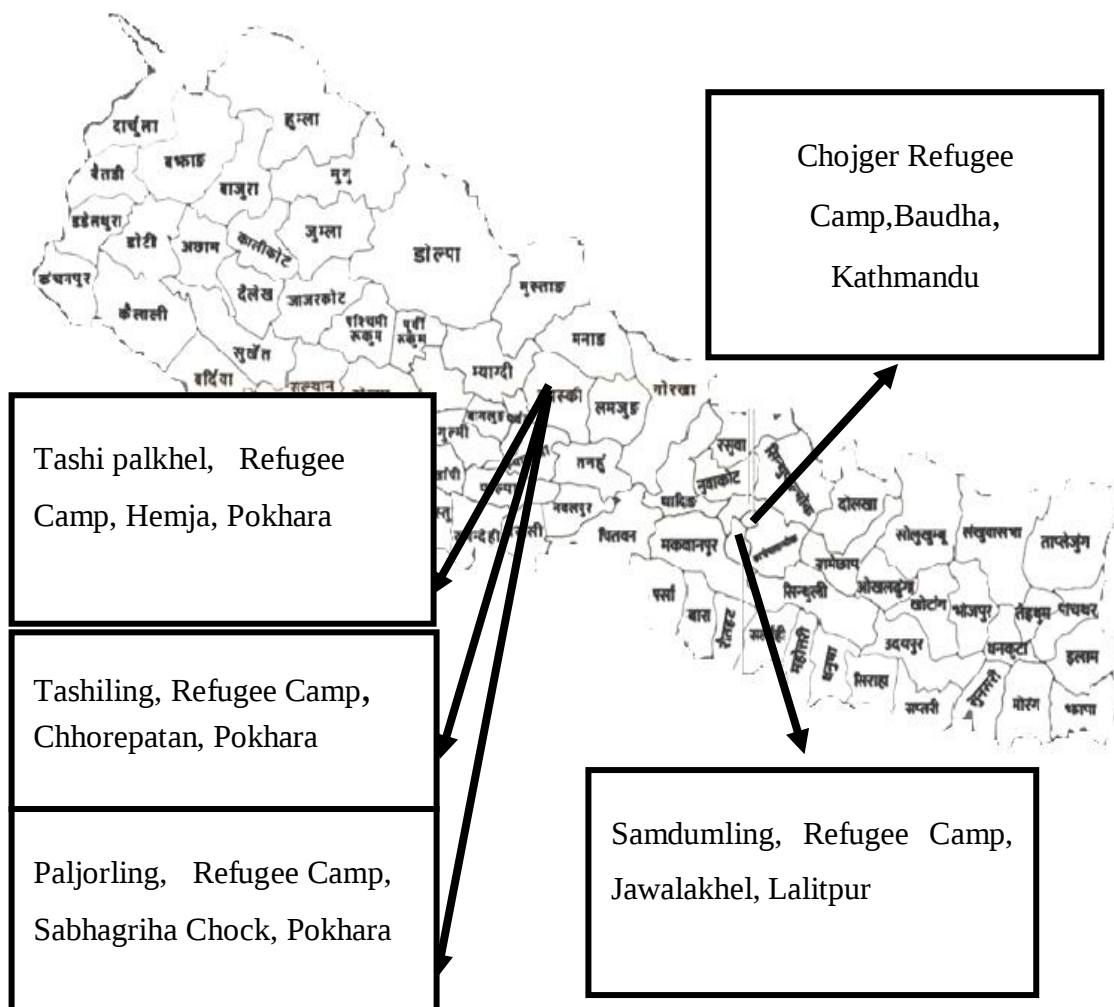
Even though there are various refugee population like Tibetan, Bhutanese and others, the researcher primary focus on Tibetan refugees. Although there are 12 Tibetan refugee settlements spread across nine districts in Nepal, logistical constraints and the remoteness of certain areas made it impractical to include all of them in this study. Consequently, five camps situated in densely populated urban centers were selected, as they offer greater access to livelihood opportunities, education and social integration. By concentrating on these urban settlements, this research aims to provide a representative understanding of the broader Tibetan refugee experience while acknowledging the limitations in covering all existing camps. Among the twelve Tibetan refugee camps, five specific camps were selected across three

districts: Kaski, Kathmandu and Lalitpur. These camps were chosen to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences and challenges faced by Tibetan refugees. The selection of these study areas were based on their significance to the refugee issues, providing practical setting to observe and analyze the interactions between Tibetan refugees, local communities and government authorities. The five Tibetan refugee camps are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) Tasiling, Pokhara | b) Tashi palkheil, Pokhara |
| b) Paljoring Tashigang, Pokhara | d) Samdupling, Jawalakhel |
| e) Chojger, Baudha | |

Figure 3.3

Field Study Areas



Source: Field Study 2025

3.4 Study Population and Selection of Participants

A convenience-based and purposive sampling techniques are employed in this study to ensure the inclusion of participants who have direct experience and involvement in refugee conditions and related security issues. This approaches was chosen due to the practical challenges associated with accessing a dispersed and potentially vulnerable Refugees population, as well as the constraints of time and resources. By selecting participants who were readily available and willing to share their insights, the study aimed to gather firsthand information from individuals closely engaged in refugee affairs, such as government officials, representatives from the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations, and members of the refugee community.

Table 3.1

Data Collection Methods

Methods	Tools	Participants	Location	Size
Interview	Interview Questions	Tibetan refugees/Locals/ Government Officials	Kaski, Lalitpur and Kathmandu	30
Focus Group Discussion	Open ended questions	District Security Committee	District Administration office, Pokhara	6
Focus Group Discussion	Open ended questions	District Security Committee	District Administration office, Kathmandu	6
Key Informant Interview	Interview Questions	▪ Former Home secretary ▪ Secretary(Ward-25), Hemja ,Pokhara ▪ Employee of DAO Pokhara	Pokhara, Lalitpur and Kathmandu	3

Source: Field Study 2025

Note: The consent form, participants list and questions of interview, FGD and KII are attached in Appendix “A” “B” “C” “D” and “E”.

This method allowed the researcher to obtain relevant and perspectives on the subject matter. However, it also introduces certain limitations, such as the potential for sampling bias and the inability to generalize findings to the broader refugee population. Despite these constraints, the approach was considered appropriate for capturing valuable qualitative insights that contribute to the understanding of the security and socio-political challenges faced by refugees in Nepal.

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method that involves a facilitated discussion with a small group of 6 to 8 participants who share common characteristics relevant to the research topic. The goal is to gather insights through group interactions and observations of dynamics, allowing researchers to explore attitudes, perceptions and experiences. FGDs provide a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives by encouraging open discussion, making them a valuable tool in qualitative research.

A Key Informant Interview (KII) is also a qualitative research method that involves in-depth, one to one interviews with individuals who have specialized knowledge or experience relevant to the research topic. KIIs help researchers gain deeper insights into specific issues, policies, or community dynamics (Kumar, 1989).

Interviews with Tibetan refugees, local residents and government officials provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by the refugee community, including social integration, access to resources and security concerns and threat posed by the presence of Tibetan refugees. To gain a broader perspective, FGDs were conducted with the District Security Committees in Kaski and Kathmandu. These discussions highlighted key administrative policies and security challenges associated with Tibetan refugees, offering a deeper understanding of the government's approach to managing their presence.

While FGDs were not conducted in Lalitpur, the responses from that district closely aligned with those collected from other regions. KIIs were conducted with the government officials Former Home Secretary, Secretary, ward office-25, Pokhara and employee of DAO Pokhara who gave the valuable insight in term of security threats posed by Tibetan refugees, strengthening security measures and documentation system in government offices.

Interviewing, observing, collecting and feeling are essential for understanding the lived experiences of Tibetan refugees through qualitative data collection in Kaski, Lalitpur and

Kathmandu. Interviewing gathers firsthand accounts from refugees, Local inhabitants and concerning stakeholders, ensuring depth through semi-structured or informal conversations. Observing involves monitoring daily life, infrastructure and interactions to capture realities. Collecting includes reviewing documents, photographs and reports to provide historical and policy context. Feeling immerses researchers in the community, fostering empathy through direct engagement. Applying these methods offers a comprehensive, human-centered understanding of their socio-economic conditions, resilience and policy challenges. The data collection process was carried out from January 05 to 18, 2025.

3.5 Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation

The data processing phase followed a systematic approach to organizing the collected information for meaningful analysis. The process began with transcribing interviews, allowing the researcher to categorize responses and identify recurring patterns and themes. A thematic analysis method was employed, as it is particularly well-suited for qualitative data. These themes were carefully reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data, followed by an interpretation of the findings in alignment with the objectives.

The results were presented descriptively to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the study's key insights. Narratives and direct quotes from participants were included to highlight personal experiences, while contextual explanations offered a deeper understanding of the challenges and dynamics of refugee status in kaski, Kathmandu and Lalitpur.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The research strictly followed ethical guidelines to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of all participants, including refugees and law enforcement personnel. Personal data and sensitive information were handled with utmost care to prevent any potential harm or consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring they fully understood the purpose and their voluntarily participation.

Anonymity was maintained throughout the research process to protect the identities of individuals and their responses. Similarly, all sources of information were properly cited in accordance with APA 7 standards to uphold academic integrity and prevent plagiarism. The collected data was presented transparently, ensuring that the findings remained honest and unbiased while respecting the rights and dignity of all participants. This ethical approach was undertaken to foster trust, integrity and accountability throughout the research process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

The objective of this study is to analyze the status of Refugees and internal security threats to Nepal. The study primarily focuses on five Tibetan refugee camps across Kaski, Lalitpur and Kathmandu, within various settlements, using a qualitative research design. Data were gathered through interviews with 21 Tibetan refugees, six local individuals, three government officials, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) involving stakeholders with expertise in security and government employees. The findings reveal the current status of Tibetan refugees, highlighting the ongoing challenges they face. Similarly, the study identifies potential security threats associated with the refugee population and emphasizes the need for strengthened security measures to mitigate risks. The analysis underscores the complex relationship between refugee status and security concerns, urging both local and national authorities to enhance protection frameworks and address vulnerabilities effectively.

4.1.1 Status of Tibetan Refugee in Nepal

Nepal has a longstanding tradition of providing refuge to individuals who have fled their home countries for humanitarian reasons. As of 2023, a total of 145 states had signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, 146 had endorsed its 1967 Protocol, and 143 had ratified both agreements. By the end of 2023, 149 countries were parties to one or both instruments. Although Nepal is not a signatory to either the convention or the protocol, it has granted asylum on humanitarian grounds to individuals from the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, Bhutan, and other nations (GCR, UNHCR 2023).

As per UNHCR records, refugees in Nepal are primarily divided into three categories: Tibetan refugees, Bhutanese refugees and other refugee groups. In addition, there are individuals from various countries who have moved to Nepal and are recognized as asylum seekers. However, the Government of Nepal (GoN) categorizes these individuals as 'illegal migrants' despite their status as asylum seekers under international protection frameworks. The table below provides an overview of the total number of refugees in Nepal.

Table 4.1*Refugee in Nepal*

S.N.	Refugee	Numbers	Percentage
1.	Bhutanese Refugee	6350	30
2.	Tibetan	13645	65
3.	Different Nationality (Afghanistan, Myanmar, other)	975	5
	Total	20970	100

Source: UNHCR, 2024

Table 1 provides an overview of Nepal's refugee population, categorized by country of origin. Tibetan refugees make up the largest group, with 13,645 individuals (65%), reflecting Nepal's historical role as both a transit and settlement destination. Bhutanese refugees total 6,350 (30%), primarily displaced due to ethnic and political tensions in Bhutan. Additionally, 975 refugees (5%) from various countries. Notably, approximately one-third of the Tibetan refugee population has settled in Nepal.

a) Settlement of Tibetan Refugee in Nepal

The movement of Tibetan refugees into Nepal through the Himalayan border began in 1959 when the 14th Dalai Lama fled Lhasa to seek asylum in India. Although Tibetan refugees had started arriving in the 1950s, a significant influx occurred following the 1959 Lhasa uprising (International Campaign for Tibet, 2023). King Mahendra of Nepal played a key role in welcoming Tibetan refugees by opening Nepal's borders to them, regardless of their social status (Tibetan Review, 2014). Refugee camps were established along the mountain passes connecting Nepal and Tibet, despite the Chinese government's unwillingness.

In response to these hardships, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) set up emergency relief camps in 1960 at the request of the Nepali authorities. Similarly, the Nepali government, with financial assistance from the UNHCR, established additional refugee shelters (ICRC, 1961). Until the mid-1980s, Nepal maintained a welcoming approach toward Tibetan refugees, as their presence was not seen as a threat to Nepal's diplomatic relations with China. However, this stance shifted in 1989 when Nepal and China signed in Nepal

China border Agreement, which led to restrictions on the entry and transit of Tibetan refugees. (Nepal China border agreement, 1989).

As a result of these policy changes, Tibetan refugees in Nepal began facing significant challenges, particularly regarding their legal status. The main issue is the lack of proper documentation, which denies them access to essential rights such as education and employment. Before 1989, the Nepali government issued Refugee Card (RC) to Tibetan refugees, allowing them to access basic services. However, many Tibetan refugees were left undocumented, further intensifying their struggles and limiting their opportunities for integration into Nepali society.

Table 4.2

Tibetan Refugee camps and residence place in Nepal

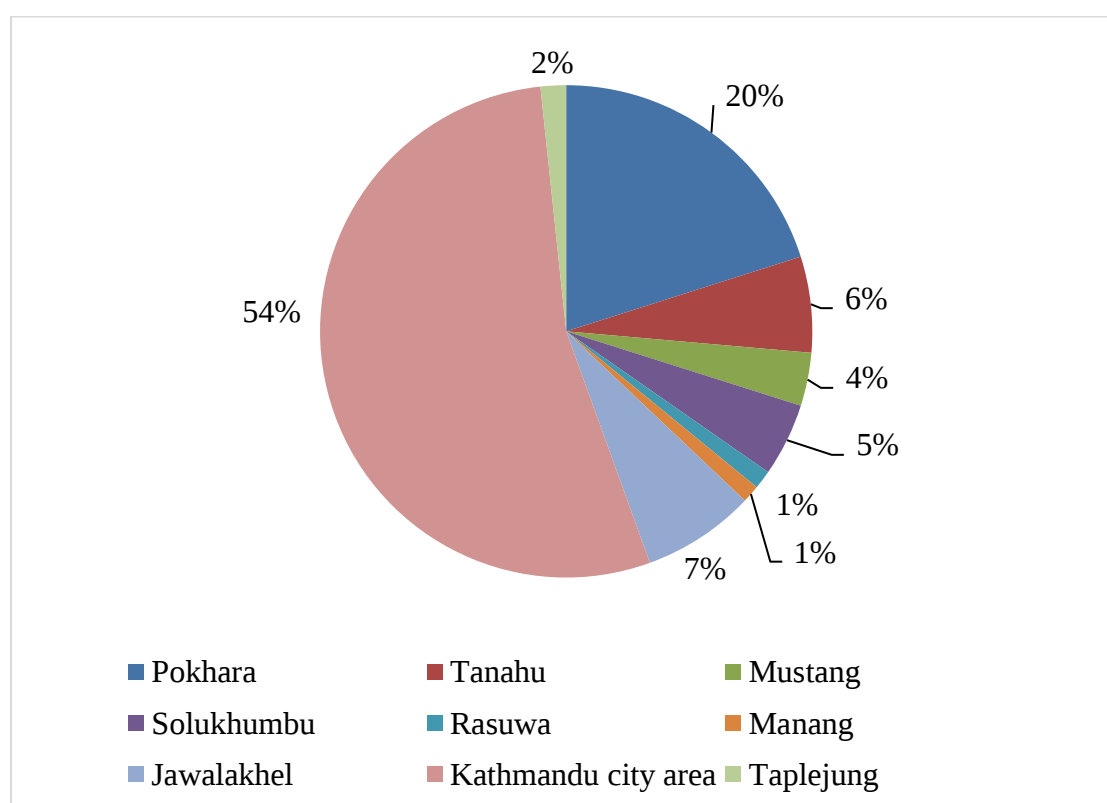
Name of the Camp/Residence	Total refugees
Tashiling- Pokhara	817
Tashi Palkheil- Pokhara	928
Paljorling- Tashigang- Pokhara	916
Jampaling- Tanahu	834
Nubri- Manang	153
Tserok Namgyaling- Mustang	463
Delekling- Solukhumbu	636
Gegyeling- Rasuwa	162
Norziling- Dhorpatan	402
Samphelung Walung- Taplejung	222
Phakshing- Swoyambhu	3886
Choejor- Boudha/ Jorpati	3245
Samdupling, Jawalakhel	981
Total	13645

Source: Field Visit and information gathered from Security Forces, 2025

The majority of Tibetan refugees are concentrated in Kathmandu, particularly in different camps such as Choejor (3,245), Phakshing (3,886), and Samdupling (981). This is primarily because Kathmandu offers better economic opportunities, access to education, healthcare, and religious institutions, making it an attractive place for settlement. In contrast, smaller camps such as Samphelung in Solukhumbu (222) Gegyeling in Rasuwa (162) and Nubri in Manang (153) are located in remote mountainous regions with limited infrastructure and fewer opportunities. However, the overall trend indicates a favorite for urban areas due to improved living conditions and greater access to resources.

Figure 4.1

Tibetan Refugees Settlement based on Districts in Nepal



Source: Field Study and information gathered from Security Forces, 2025

Tibetan refugees in Nepal are primarily concentrated in Kathmandu (55%), where economic opportunities, cultural institutions and religious centers like Boudha and Swayambhu provide a supportive environment. Kaski (20%), particularly Pokhara, hosts a significant community in camps like Tashi Palkhel, offering housing, education, and employment in handicrafts and

tourism. Smaller populations reside in Tanahu (6%), Mustang (4%), Solukhumbu (5%), and Lalitpur (8%), where they integrate with local Buddhist communities and engage in trade and religious activities. The remaining 2% are dispersed across other districts. Likewise, the settlement offices in Nepal are established across various places to support the Tibetan communities. These offices play a crucial role in managing settlement and welfare programs for these diverse regions.

Table 4.3

Tibetan settlement offices

Settlement Office	Location	Area
Gyalsaphak Tse Sum	Kathmandu (Sywambhu, Lazimpath)	Gaden Khangsar, Laimpath
Sha-Wa-Ra Sum	Kathmandu (Lazimpath)	Solukhumbhu, Walung, Rasuwa
Choejor	Near Boudhnath Stupa	Chorten & Jorpati
Samdupling	Jawalakhel	Jawalakhel
Jam-Pal-Te Gang Lodrik	Pokhara	Pokhara
Tashiling	Dorpatan, Manang, Samdo	Dorpatan, Manang, Samdo
Tashi Palkhiel	Pokhara	Pokhara

Source: Field Study and information gathered from Security Forces, 2025

b) Demographic Status

During the field study, the Tibetan refugee participants who were taken part in interview, divided into different groups based on their age, education, religion, occupation and gender.

Age Distribution

Table below represents the distribution of Tibetan participants by age groups, showing the number of participants and their respective percentage in the total sample.

Table 4.4*Age Group*

Age Group	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
20-29	4	19.01
30-39	5	23.80
40-49	3	14.28
50-59	2	9.52
60 and above	7	33.33

Source: Field Study 2025

This table shows the older refugees 33.33% have resided inside the camps without any business and jobs due to their age, depend on their other family members while younger generation use to go for education and jobs .That is why this types of population were available during the field study.

Gender Distribution

The majority of participants are male 16 (76.19%), while female participants account for only 5 (23.80%). This may suggests, Tibetan men are more likely to participate in interview or that men have a higher presence in economic activities within the refugee community.

Occupation Distribution

A significant portion of Tibetan participants (42.85%) were previously employed in the carpet industry, which was once a major source of livelihood for the Tibetan refugee community. However, 19.04% currently have no income, emphasizing economic vulnerability due to legal restrictions on employment. A few participants have managed to start businesses, while some rely on shop rent or foreign aid for survival.

This below table clearly shows the occupation which they were engaged previously and currently working the different temporary jobs due to the unregistered since 1995. Because of their unregistered status, they have engaged in minimal salary and extra facilities while working any kind of employment.

Table 4.5*Occupation Distribution*

Occupation	Number of participants	Percentage (%)
Carpet Industry (Former)	9	42.85
Unemployment	4	19.04
Business	4	18.84
Aid-Based	1	4.76
Driving, Shop Rent, Aid	3	14.28

Source: Field Study 2025

Religion Distribution

All participants identified as Buddhist, reflecting the strong cultural and religious identity of the Tibetan refugee community. This aligns with the traditional beliefs and practices of Tibetans, emphasizing the role of Buddhism in their social and spiritual life.

c) Identity Documents and Residency Rights

The analysis of identity documents and residency rights for Tibetan refugees in Nepal reveals significant discrepancies in legal recognition and access to essential services. According to a Field Study involving 21 participants, 8 possess Refugee Cards (RCs), while 13 are unregistered. A key issue raised is the ban on issuing new RCs since 1995, which has made it increasingly difficult for younger generations to gain legal recognition. The lack of proper documentation severely limits their access to basic services like education, employment, healthcare, and financial services. Those without RCs face heightened vulnerability, being excluded from formal job opportunities and encountering bureaucratic obstacles when attempting to obtain necessary documents.

Tibetan refugees often face challenges regarding identity documents and residency rights, impacting their access to essential services and legal protections. This lack of documentation restricts their ability to pursue higher education, secure employment and access basic services. Despite appeals from human rights organizations and international entities, the

Nepalese government has not resumed issuing these vital identification documents (Phayul, 2021).

Registered refugees with RC have access to basic education and healthcare, while unregistered refugees face significant restrictions, including limited access to higher education and financial services. Without proper identification, unregistered refugees struggle to secure formal employment, achieve economic opportunities, often relying on unstable sources of income. Legal recognition challenges further complicate daily life, making birth registration, and travel and job applications. Unregistered refugees also face social discrimination and bureaucratic obstacles when renewing outdated RCs. Although they do not experience major conflicts with law enforcement, the lack of documentation restricts their opportunities, including the possibility of seeking better prospects abroad.

Figure 4.3

Spoiled Refugee Card



Source: Field Study, 2025

While being interviewed, one of the Tibetan refugee participants showed his damaged RC and stated,

"I have a damaged RC. The administration did not replace it; they simply signed randomly on any empty space and attached a makeshift piece of paper" (P1, Interview, 05 Jan, 2025).

Regarding the challenges faced by the Tibetan refugee due to lack of RC, another Tibetan refugees stated that

My child has faced immense challenges due to the lack of legal recognition, struggling to access education, secure a job, open a bank account or even consider opportunities abroad. Despite being born in Nepal, his statelessness has closed doors at every step, leaving him with uncertainty and limited prospects for the future (P3, interview, 05 Jan., 2025).

This narrative indicates that born in Nepal but denied legal recognition, his child faces challenges due to statelessness. Without official documentation, he struggles to access education, secure employment, open a bank account, or explore opportunities abroad. This lack of recognition has closed countless doors, leaving his future uncertain and opportunities limited. The Chairman of Tibetan community stated that

Even though the Nepalese government has provided us with a place to stay, our hands and feet remain tied by invisible restrictions. We do not wish to leave for financial reasons but rather in pursuit of recognition and equality as human beings (P2, Interview 07 Jan, 2025).

The essence of the narrative is Tibetan refugees in Nepal face severe challenges due to statelessness and the lack of legal recognition, primarily caused by the absence of RCs. Without proper documentation, they struggle to access employment, financial services and international travel, leaving them in a constant state of uncertainty and exclusion despite generations of residence in Nepal. Many describe feeling as though their "hands and feet are tied," as they are granted residence but denied basic rights.

d) Access to Education and Essential Services

The response from Tibetan refugees in Nepal highlights significant disparities in access to education and essential services, primarily based on their legal status and possession of RC. While receiving basic education and healthcare within refugee camps, many unregistered refugees face significant difficulties in accessing higher education, financial services, and stable employment opportunities.

Education stands out as one of the main challenges, especially for those without legal recognition. Some participants with RCs were able to access basic education up to grade 10 or 12 (+2), but many highlighted their inability to pursue higher education due to their lack of legal status. Without RC, refugees face barriers to enrolling in universities, applying for scholarships or participating in skill development programs which limits their career prospects. The restriction on issuing new RCs since 1995 has created generational inequalities, with older refugees benefiting from educational opportunities while younger generations born after 1995 struggle to obtain formal education. This legal obstacle has led to a cycle of educational exclusion. During the interview one of the participant stated that

I wanted to become a nurse, but in Nepal, I am required to show Nepali documentation, which prevented me from getting into the program. I completed my studies at the Tibetan refugee school and after finishing, I tried to pursue nursing but I couldn't access education here. I'm still trying but there are no opportunities in Nepal, so I'm planning to go to India to study (P4, Interview 07 Jan, 2025).

This response highlights that while primary healthcare services are available within refugee camps, accessing specialized medical care remains a significant challenge, particularly for unregistered refugees. Some participants mentioned that health services are offered but are limited and without proper documentation, they face difficulties obtaining advanced medical treatment at hospitals outside the camp.

A major issue was the inability to open bank accounts due to the lack of legal identification. Many unregistered refugees are unable to access financial services, government aid or secure stable employment, further hindering their ability to improve their living conditions. Those without RCs also face challenges in registering important life events, such as births, deaths and marriages which complicates the process of establishing official records needed for long-term stability. Many young refugees wish to pursue further education and create better futures, but their legal status remains a major barrier.

e) Employment

The responses from Tibetan refugees in Nepal highlight limited and unstable employment opportunities, largely due to their legal status and lack of proper documentation. Unregistered refugees are unable to secure formal jobs, open bank accounts or register businesses, forcing them into informal work like family-run businesses or handicrafts. Even those Refugees with

RC face job insecurity, as their status doesn't grant full labor rights. The decline of industries like carpet-making has further reduced employment options, especially for older refugees. Legal and social barriers also prevent refugees from accessing professional jobs, leading many to low-income, cash-based work. This lack of opportunities fosters a sense of impossibility, with many seeking to migrate abroad for better job predictions and legal recognition. During the interview, A Tibetan refugee mentioned that

“Most Tibetans are forced to run small businesses such as tea shops, pickle sales, or handicrafts for survival, as they are not permitted to work legally in Nepal without proper identification” (P19, Interview, 17 Jan., 2025).

The situation is unfavorable for Tibetans born since 1995, as Nepal stopped issuing RC, leaving them undocumented and further restricting their employment options. A Tibetan NGO worker in Kathmandu shared:

RCs are basically useless and offer no real benefits. RC holders should be given more rights. When attempting to get a PAN card, we are required to obtain a letter from the District Administration Office confirming our right to work, but getting that letter is a difficult and lengthy process (P22, Interview, and 18 Jan., 2025).

Many young Tibetans, despite being qualified, face difficulties finding jobs due to their lack of legal documentation. Nepali companies are hesitant to hire undocumented individuals, and refugees are often viewed with suspicion by the state. During the interview conducted in Refugee Camp, one of the participant stated that

A young Tibetan lady, who graduated with a bachelor's degree, shared that while her parents encouraged her to pursue further studies, she felt that education was pointless because she would not be able to find a good job to support her family's survival. (P23, Interview, and 17 Jan., 2025).

While some families depend on rental income or support from UNHCR for their livelihood, the limited availability of stable job opportunities compel many to consider emigration. Similarly, political and social challenges create uncertainty, leaving many young Tibetans feeling discouraged about their future. Strengthening economic opportunities, education and community support can help address these concerns and provide a more hopeful outlook for the younger generation.

f) Nepal Government support

The experiences of Tibetan refugees in Nepal highlight the challenges they face due to the lack of direct government support in key areas such as legal recognition, employment, education, and social services. Many refugees note that they do not receive financial or material assistance from the Nepali government, leaving them dependent on international aid, community support, or informal jobs for their livelihood. While those with RCs have limited access to education and healthcare within refugee camps, these services remain inadequate, particularly for individuals born after 1995, who are unable to obtain official documentation.

The process of obtaining travel documents and renewing refugee status is often hindered by bureaucratic delay, making it even more difficult for individuals to achieve mobility and long-term stability. Although some refugees acknowledge that Nepal has allowed them to reside in the country, they feel their rights are significantly restricted with invisible barriers preventing their full participation in society. The overall sentiment among Tibetan refugees is one of exclusion and marginalization, prompting many to seek opportunities abroad in hopes of securing legal status and basic human rights.

g) Social Amalgation

Tibetan refugees in Nepal continue to face social exclusion and problems despite having lived in the country for generations. While conducting interview with participants, one of the refugee stated that

Sometimes, a few locals rarely use derogatory terms such as "Bhote" or "refugee," reinforcing the marginalized status of Tibetan refugees. However, the majority of people maintain good relations with us, especially in social activities and daily interactions (P 8, interview, 6 Jan, 2025).

Some Tibetan refugees have built positive relationships with local Nepali communities through business, marriage, and informal interactions but full social integration remains a challenge. Most continue to live in segregated settlements, which limits their engagement with the broader Nepali population and reinforces social divisions. Even intermarriage with Nepali citizens does not guarantee legal or social inclusion, as Tibetan refugees remain stateless, unable to acquire citizenship even through marriage. This legal exclusion extends

to their children, further continuing their marginalization. During the interview, one of the local participant stated that

They have maintained a good relationship with Tibetan refugees for a long time. They share similar appearances and a sense of brotherhood, kinship, and familial bonds due to their long history of exchanging jobs and services. There has been no bitterness in their relationship, as they have always worked together in harmony (P16 Interview, 8 Jan, 2025).

The lack of citizenship rights significantly deepens their social isolation. Without legal recognition, Tibetan refugees are denied basic rights such as voting, government employment, and property ownership, forcing them to rely on informal networks for survival. Their inability to access professional jobs or financial services means many are restricted to low-income, informal employment in trades such as handicrafts, small businesses, or carpet weaving. These economic limitations further prevent them from fully integrating into Nepali society.

This continuous marginalization has a profound psychological impact, particularly on younger generations. Many young Tibetans feel uncertain about their future, as they lack access to stable careers, higher education, and financial independence. Growing up in a country where they have lived their entire lives yet remain treated as foreigners leads to frustration and a desire to seek better opportunities elsewhere.

h) Freedom of Movement within Nepal

Holders of RC are generally allowed freedom of movement within Nepal, except in "restricted areas," which are mostly remote border regions near China, provided they do not live there. However, an increasing number of Tibetans with valid Nepali identification documents have reported facing heightened enquiry when traveling. At police checkpoints, they claim to be treated with more suspicion than before, and when traveling by bus, they are often singled out for questioning, separate from other passengers (Manandhar, 2021).

In some instances, it appears the police are instructed to identify Tibetans among travelers heading to Kathmandu and ensure they are not traveling to engage in "political activities," such as attending protests or gatherings. Tibetan residents without RC face more harassment and mistreatment than those with RCs. The main focus of the police is often to verify whether they are long-term residents or recent arrivals from Tibet, or activists from India. This can

usually be confirmed by presenting photo identification, such as a driver's license or other proof of residence. The most severe movement restrictions are observed within Kathmandu, where police surveillance of Tibetan-populated areas has intensified. Tibetans residing in Baudhdha and Swayambhu, where the Tibetan community is highly concentrated, frequently experience identity checks, especially during nighttime. Due to these strict measures, many young Tibetans without proper identification have imposed self-restrictions on their movement.

.i) International Travel

Tibetan residents are not legally entitled to obtain a Nepali passport. To travel internationally, they must apply for a travel document which is typically valid for one year. The issuance of this document is at the decision of the authorities and each application is considered individually. To be eligible for a travel document, an applicant must provide a valid RC, proof of the trip's purpose, and pay a fee. However, the process is often delayed and uncertain due to bureaucratic lengthy process. So, Tibetans without RCs are not eligible for these travel documents. One Tibetan refugee shared

In 2018, he attempted to travel to India using his Refugee Card, only to be stopped by Nepali immigration officers, who informed him that the RC was only valid for travel within Nepal. He was harassed and sent back to the refugee camp. (P5, Interview, 08 Jan, 2025).

Based on the interview, it can be seen that the majority of refugees do not want to settle in Nepal rather they prefer to move elsewhere. Another participant stated that

My goal is to provide a good education for my children, and I just wish they could get proper papers. I want to send my son to study in India, like my daughter, and hope that by paying a fee, they can obtain papers there. Without papers in Nepal, their future is uncertain, so India offers a better chance for work and opportunities. I would leave immediately if we had passports. (P18, Interview, 14 Jan., 2025).

As a result, many Tibetan refugees express a strong wish to move to countries like India, Canada, or the U.S., where they believe their children can access education, employment, and basic human rights. The lack of legal recognition in Nepal leaves them with few opportunities, driving them to seek a future abroad where they can find stability and dignity. One of the participant stated that

Many Tibetans attempting to renew their travel documents must provide multiple witnesses and navigate a lengthy bureaucratic process. A Tibetan refugee from Pokhara described that to obtain a travel document, an applicant must present five witnesses along with other required documents while enduring harsh and often inhumane treatment at the office. (P6, Interview, 08 Jan, 2025).

The evidences of Tibetan refugees in Nepal highlight significant restrictions on movement, bureaucratic obstacles and a strong desire to leave Nepal for better opportunities abroad. Even with RC, many refugees face harassment and mistreatment when trying to travel, as Nepali authorities often refuse to recognize the RC for international travel. The process of obtaining travel documents is complicated, requiring multiple witnesses and a lengthy procedure. These limitations not only hinder their ability to visit family or pursue better education but also deepen their sense of statelessness and exclusion from legal protections.

Employees working at the ward office and DAO, Kaski, when interviewed about RC renewal and the necessary documents, stated that

There is no lengthy process. They emphasized that their work is based on policy and legal procedures. They also mentioned that they facilitate the process as much as possible, providing assistance similar to that given to Nepali citizens wherever applicable (KII 2 and 3, 8 Jan, 2025).

Based on this statement, there is no bureaucratic delay in providing the necessary documents. They argue that they follow the legal procedure and treat them as Nepali citizens.

4.1.2 Impact on Internal Security of Nepal

The absence of legal recognition and integration for Tibetan refugees in Nepal has significant implications for internal security, particularly concerning statelessness, economic instability and diplomatic challenges. Without official documentation, many Tibetan refugees are compelled to work in the informal sector, leading to unregulated financial activities and increasing their vulnerability to exploitation or illegal employment. The lack of proper identification and registration further complicates law enforcement efforts in tracking undocumented movements, raising concerns about border security and unauthorized migration.

Likewise, Nepal's strategic location between China and India makes the Tibetan refugee situation particularly sensitive, as China encourages to limit Tibetan political activities within

Nepal. This has resulted in heightened surveillance, restrictions on protests and limitations on Tibetan cultural and religious events, straining relations between the refugee community and local authorities. The prolonged statelessness and marginalization of Tibetan youth contribute to frustration fostering social unrest, resentment and potential exposures.

a) Criminal Activities

Tibetan refugees have been linked to criminal activities that pose challenges to internal security of Nepal. Cases involving the use of counterfeit passports, fraudulent acquisition of citizenship, and involvement in smuggling gold and other contraband, underscore the severity of the situation.

Table 4.6

Tibetan refugee involvement crimes

S N	Case	Date	Place	Case Status	Remark
1	Smuggling	2024	Nepal	Nabbed	60 kg gold smuggled
2	Forged Document	2023	Nepal	Arrested	500+ fake citizenships,
3	Duplicate Citizenship	2023	Nepal	Arrested	Fraudulent citizenship, each 500000
4	Gambling	2024	Nepal	Arrested	Fake citizenship, large cash seizure
5	Rape	2024	Nepal	Arrested	Victim was an 11-year-old girl
6	Drug	2021	Nepal	Convicted	12 Tibetan refugees convicted
7	Poaching	2009	Nepal	Arrested	Wildlife trafficking, endangered species
8	Protest	2011	Nepal	Arrested	Riot police intervened

Source: Nepal News, My Republica, Nepal Khabar and Ratopati 2024

Nepal has witnessed a range of criminal activities in recent years, reflecting issues of law enforcement, fraud and organized crime. Smuggling remains a major concern, as seen in the 2024 case where authorities nabbed 60 kg of smuggled gold. Fraudulent activities related to citizenship are also prevalent, with over 500 fake citizenship documents discovered in 2023 and cases where individuals obtained duplicate citizenships, each valued at 500,000. The misuse of fake documents has also been linked to gambling and financial crimes, often leading to large cash seizures. Violent crimes, such as the rape of an 11-year-old girl in 2024, highlight serious social concerns. Drug-related offenses continue to pose challenges, as seen in the 2021 conviction of 12 Tibetan refugees. Wildlife poaching remains a persistent issue, with arrests related to the trafficking of endangered species dating back to 2009. Similarly, Nepal has seen protests that sometimes escalate into clashes with law enforcement, such as the 2011 incident where riot police intervened. These cases illustrate the diverse nature of criminal activities in Nepal, emphasizing the need for stronger enforcement and legal reforms. The mentioned photograph depicts the protest which escalate and impact the internal security.

Figure 4.3

Protest during the Tibetan Uprising day



Source: BBC news 2011

Tibetan Uprising Day, observed on March 10th, commemorates the 1959 uprising against Chinese rule. Protests worldwide demand Tibet's freedom, highlighting issues like human rights, religious freedom and cultural preservation. This picture illustrates how such activities can create security threats within domestic arena. One of the Participants expressed that

The lack of proper legal documentation among many Tibetan refugees in Nepal has created oversight challenges, potentially fueling illicit trade networks, organized crime and human trafficking. The possibility of smuggling and unauthorized economic activities within refugee settlements further complicates security measures (P28, Interview, 13 Jan, 2025).

The engagement of Tibetan refugees in criminal activities such as forging Nepali passports, obtaining fraudulent citizenship, smuggling and committing serious crimes like drug trafficking, rape and poaching poses a substantial threat to internal security of Nepal. The recurrence of such crimes exposes weaknesses in Nepal's immigration system and administrative processes, revealing poor governance at various levels. Criminal networks that facilitate fake citizenship and passports, like the gang led by Krishna Bahadur Katuwal and the arrests at Tribhuvan International Airport, not only undermine Nepal's national identity but also pose significant security risks by enabling unauthorized individuals to move freely across the border area.

The rise of economic crimes such as large-scale gold smuggling involving Tibetan individuals like Ganga Tashi, underscores the transnational nature of these activities and their potential links to global illicit trade networks. The infiltration of criminal elements into Nepal's bureaucracy, exemplified by government officials engaging in document forgery, weakens state institutions and erodes public trust. These issues also have broader diplomatic implications, particularly in Nepal's relations with China which remains highly sensitive to Tibetan refugee movements.

b) Challenges Maintaining Law and Order

Frequent demonstrations and protests by Tibetan refugees often escalate into law-and-order issues, particularly on politically sensitive occasions. According to the members of FGD following are the key events where majority of the Tibetan conduct various activities.

Tibetan refugees observe several significant events throughout the year, deeply rooted in their history, struggles, and spiritual heritage. These commemorations serve as a way to preserve their identity, honor their sacrifices and reinforce their commitment to the Tibetan cause. Independence Day and Freedom Day are observed as reminders of the Tibetan people's enduring aspiration for autonomy and self-determination. Similarly, Martyr's Day is a solemn occasion dedicated to those who have sacrificed their lives for Tibet's freedom. Tibetans mark this day with prayers, candlelight vigils and public gatherings, reflecting on their ongoing struggle and paying tribute to fallen heroes. The main events which are observed by Tibetan refugees as follows:

Table 4.7

Major Events of Tibetan Refugees

Date	Events
13 February	Independence Day
10 March	Freedom Day
14 March	Memories of the death refugee and protest program
28 March	Martyr day
25 April	Birthday of Panchen Lama (Successor to Dalai Lama)
17 May	Unity Day
26 June	Birthday of Karmapan Lama
6 July	Birthday of Dalai Lama
12 July	Puja remembering the day of Buddha enlightenment
2 September	Democracy Day
10 December	Nobel Prize Winning day of Dalai Lama

Source: District Administration Office, Kathmandu, 2025

The participants further stated that during these days, various protest and rallies are organized by the Tibetan community. These programs are sensitive and hence security forces are kept in alert around the camp and popular Buddhist site.

Figure 4.4

A Tibetan activist poses with a Tibetan Flag in Kathmandu



Source: International Campaign for Tibet, 2011

This figure illustrates an incident where a Tibetan refugee publicly displayed the Tibetan flag during a high-level visit from Chinese officials. In response, Nepalese authorities detained the activist for nearly three days after he posed for a photo with the flag. Following his release, he ultimately fled to India, fearing further repercussions. This incident underscores the sensitivity surrounding Tibetan political activism in Nepal and highlights the broader security challenges such actions can pose, particularly in major urban areas. The event reflects the delicate balance Nepal should maintain in managing refugee rights while upholding its diplomatic relations with China. It raises concerns about freedom of expression and the extent of restrictions placed on Tibetan refugees within Nepalese territory.

Figure 4.5

Tibetan Monks shouting Anti-Chinese Slogans



Source: Tibetan Buddhist monks in exile, Getty Image, 2008

On March 25, 2008, in Kathmandu, monks protested near the Chinese Embassy, leading to their arrest. This event highlighted the threats for the Nepali security and government as well (Getty Images. (2008)). One of the KII participant stated that

The presence of Tibetan refugees in Nepal has led to several ongoing challenges, including protests, activism, human trafficking, exploitation, and social instability. Tibetan refugees often engage in peaceful demonstrations advocating for human rights and Tibetan autonomy, which Nepali authorities view as a diplomatic concern due to their close ties with China. As a result, the government imposes strict surveillance and restrictions on their activities to prevent any anti-China movements. (KII 1, 14 Jan., 2025)

Protests during visits from Chinese dignitaries in Nepal, though largely peaceful, often result in arrests due to diplomatic sensitivities. During President Xi Jinping's 2019 visit, several individuals, including a 14-year-old girl and a 65-year-old woman, were detained for carrying items with Tibetan symbols. Nepal's increased monitoring of Tibetans during politically sensitive occasions, such as the Dalai Lama's birthday reflects its growing diplomatic ties with China. While intended to maintain law and order, these measures can affect social harmony, create challenges for refugees and contribute to a sense of isolation

within the Tibetan community (Rai, 2019). Supporting the similar view, member of FGD stated that

“They can obstruct Chinese program that happen in Nepal by chanting anti-Chinese slogan and even at some cases self-immolation incident might happen.” (FGD 1, Focus Group Discussion, 13 Jan., 2025).

On November 10, 2011, just a month before Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s scheduled visit to Nepal, a man identified only as Bhutuk attempted self-immolation in front of the Bauddha Stupa in Kathmandu, reflecting similar protests in Tibet. On February 13, 2013, a 25-year-old Tibetan monk Druptchen Tsering, who had recently arrived from China, set himself on fire at the same location. He was immediately taken to Kathmandu Teaching Hospital but sadly passed away within hours. Similarly, on August 5, 2013, Karma Ngedon Gyatso, a former monk who had sought refuge in Nepal, self-immolated at the Buddha Stupa and was pronounced dead upon arrival at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital. (“Under China’s Shadow,” 2014). Another members of the FGD pointed out that

Tibetan refugee communities in Nepal have a history of engaging in protests, rallies, and self-immolations, especially during prominent Chinese visits, creating significant challenges for law enforcement. Their participation in covert activities, such as anti-China gatherings in religious and community centers, adds complexity to security efforts (FGD 1, Focus Group Discussion, 13 Jan., 2025).

According to the FGD member, Tibetan refugee communities in Nepal pose complex security and diplomatic challenges. Their history of protests, rallies, and even self-immolations, particularly during high-profile Chinese visits, creates difficulties for law enforcement agencies. Similarly, their involvement in covert activities, such as anti-China gatherings within religious and community centers, further confuses security measures. These actions not only strain Nepal’s diplomatic relations with China but also necessitate heightened surveillance, intelligence operations and stricter policy enforcement to maintain internal stability and prevent potential disturbances.

c) Resource Strain

The ongoing presence of Tibetan refugees in Nepal places significant pressure on the country’s limited resources, especially in urban areas like Kathmandu and Pokhara. As

refugees settle in these regions, they compete with the local population for essential services such as housing, employment, healthcare and education. Given Nepal's economic struggles, this increased demand worsens existing shortages, raising the cost of living and creating greater socio-economic strain. Many Tibetan refugees unable to access formal employment due to their legal status, rely on informal sectors such as handicrafts, small businesses and street vending. While these activities provide them with income, they can also disrupt local markets, leading to bitterness from Nepali citizens who view refugees as economic competitors.

In addition to economic challenges, the rising number of Tibetan refugees require, increased law enforcement and security monitoring, particularly in areas where political activism or protests may occur. This requires additional policing resources, diverting personnel and funds from other vital areas like crime prevention and border security. The competition for resources and services has the potential to create tensions between refugees and local communities, threatening social harmony. Local frustration driven by economic hardship and limited employment opportunities can escalate into conflicts, increasing friction between Nepali citizens and Tibetan refugees.

d) Cultural and Social Tensions

Cultural and social tensions in Nepal are influenced by the presence of Tibetan refugees whose identity and traditions often face restrictions due to diplomatic sensitivities with China. Increased surveillance, limitations on cultural expression and suppression of protests contribute to a sense of isolation among the refugee community. Members of the FGD 2, stated that

The presence of Tibetan refugees in Nepal has contributed to cultural and social tensions due to their distinct identity and political aspirations. Their activism, including protests, sometimes creates friction with authorities and affects diplomatic relations. Social integration remains limited, with concerns over certain activities raising suspicions. (FGD 2, Focus Group Discussion, 16 Jan., 2025).

This statement tells that the Tibetan refugee's presence in Nepal shows security challenges due to their distinct identity, political activism and affiliations. Their involvement in anti-China protests strains Nepal's diplomatic ties with China, prompting state surveillance and

occasional restrictions. Limited integration within Nepali society has led to concerns about illicit activities, particularly in nightlife sectors, raising risks of criminal exploitation.

e) Human Security and Vulnerability

The limited access to basic human rights for Tibetan refugees in Nepal raises concerns about human security challenges. Many refugees remain undocumented, severely restricting their access to essential services such as education, employment, healthcare and the freedom of movement. Without legal recognition, they cannot obtain national identity documents which limits their participation in economic and social activities. As a result, Tibetan refugees experience systemic exclusion, pushing them into poverty and forcing them to rely on informal and often precarious forms of work. This instability increases their vulnerability to exploitation, including labor abuse and human trafficking and heightens their psychological distress due to ongoing uncertainty about their future.

These vulnerabilities are especially pronounced among younger refugees, who grow up with limited access to quality education and employment opportunities. Lacking a clear path to self-sufficiency, many young Tibetans become frustrated and disillusioned, feeling trapped in a cycle of dependency with no hope for improvement. This prolonged state of prohibition can breed social unrest, as resentment builds over systemic exclusion. Although there is currently no significant radical movement among Tibetan refugees, the ongoing restrictions on their rights and suppression of their identity may contribute to rising tensions over time, which could pose future security concerns for Nepal.

The lack of legal status for Tibetan refugees in Nepal compel them to rely on humanitarian aid which remains insufficient for long-term needs. Nepal navigates a sensitive balance between its diplomatic obligations to China and its commitment to humanitarian concerns. This legal limbo strains local resources, fuels tensions with host communities and poses socio-economic challenges. A balanced approach including legal recognition, education, and employment opportunities could promote integration and social cohesion while supporting Nepal's stability and development.

f) Border Security Vulnerabilities

Border issues have emerged as a significant concern, particularly with the movement of Tibetan refugees across Nepal's borders with China and India, which presents challenges for security agencies. Unauthorized crossings and illegal settlements add burden on security

forces, who are tasked with monitoring and regulating these activities. A participant stated that

Some factors including smuggling, human trafficking and the use of forged documents contribute to the vulnerability of border security. High-altitude Mountain passes and disguised movements such as refugees posing as pilgrims or traders, further compromise border control. Despite stricter regulations, Nepal remains a key transit point making borders vulnerable due to the illicit activities (P29, Interview, 18 Jan, 2025).

The influx of Tibetan refugees has drawn increased attention from China which views such movements as a violation of its authority. Nepal has heightened border surveillance, deployed more security personnel and implemented additional monitoring systems. However, this increased focus on managing Tibetan movement has diverted resources from other critical border security issues, including smuggling, human trafficking and illicit trade. These persistent threats particularly along Nepal's porous southern border with India, continue to enable criminal networks due to insufficient enforcement mechanisms.

Nepal faces the difficult task of balancing its responsibility to protect human rights, which discourages the forced return of refugees, with the need to maintain a strong relationship with China, an important partner in economic and infrastructure development. This balance of diplomacy and national security creates challenges for Nepal's border security, influenced by both outside political factors and internal enforcement issues. To address these challenges, Nepal needs a comprehensive approach that improves border control while honoring its humanitarian commitments and maintaining good diplomatic relations.

g) Geopolitical Implications

The Tibetan refugee issue in Nepal carries significant geopolitical implications, primarily due to Nepal's strategic position between China and India. China's influence has led to stricter surveillance and restrictions on Tibetan activism. At the same time, international organizations and Western nations advocate for refugee rights, creating diplomatic sensitivities. This delicate balance affects Nepal's foreign relations, economic partnerships, and internal stability, making the refugee situation a geopolitical challenge. Several FGD members of District Security Committee at Kathmandu highlighted that

The presence of Tibetan refugees in Nepal has significant geopolitical implications, particularly in Nepal's relations with China. Protests and demonstrations, especially during high-profile Chinese visits, create diplomatic challenges. Activities such as displaying anti-China banners, chanting slogans like "Free Tibet," and showing black flags are seen as disruptive. The management of such events falls under the responsibility of the Nepali government and the Home Ministry, reflecting policy-level decisions influenced by diplomatic considerations. (FGD 2, Focus Group Discussion, and 16 Jan., 2025).

Based on this, Tibetan refugee protests in Nepal create diplomatic challenges, especially during Chinese visits. Activities like displaying anti-China banners and chanting slogans disrupt stability. These actions strain Nepal-China relations, prompting increased security measures but the management of such events reflects the responsibility of policy level.

Uzra Zeya, the U.S. Under-Secretary for Civilian Security and Human Rights, visited Nepal in May 2022 and focused on Tibetan refugee camps in Kathmandu. After meeting with the Dalai Lama, her visit highlighted U.S. support for Tibetan rights and humanitarian aid. However, it also created diplomatic challenges for Nepal, as China sees any international attention on Tibetan issues as a threat to its sovereignty. With both Chinese influence and U.S. support, Nepal should carefully manage its relationships while handling its policies on Tibetan refugees (Poudel, 2022).

h) Activities against China

The guerrilla operation in Mustang played a key role in shaping Nepal's Tibetan refugee population. From 1959 to 1974, Mustang served as a base for Tibetan fighters resisting Chinese rule, with covert support from the U.S. CIA. These fighters, mainly from Tibet's Kham region, launched attacks against the PLA, receiving military aid. However, as U.S. support waned and Nepal sought to improve ties with China, the Nepali government, under Chinese pressure, shut down the Mustang base in 1974 (Mc Granahan, 2006).

The Dalai Lama's personal appeal to the fighters led to their surrender, marking the end of the guerrilla resistance and triggering a second wave of Tibetan refugees to Nepal. Many of these former fighters struggled to adapt to civilian life. The closure of the Mustang base marked a significant shift in Tibetan resistance and contributed to the long-term settlement

of refugees in Nepal. But their presence often leads to protests and activities perceived as against China, especially during high-level visits and significant events which give the challenges for the security agencies (Goodmann, M. H., 1986).

4.1.3 Measures to strengthen the internal Security of Nepal

Strengthening security measures for Tibetan refugees in Nepal requires a comprehensive approach that integrates intelligence gathering, surveillance and legal oversight. Deploying undercover security personnel, leveraging technology and innovation, strengthening border monitoring and conducting intelligence operations within refugee settlements can help mitigate potential threats. Similarly, fostering diplomatic coordination with China, reinforcing governance institutions and engaging in strategic diplomacy can address geopolitical concerns.

Implementing awareness programs to educate Tibetan refugees on Nepal's policies, issuing RC for proper documentation, providing modern training and capacity building for security forces and regulating the involvement of international NGOs can further contribute to maintaining stability. By integrating legal, diplomatic and security strategies, Nepal can maintain internal security while fulfilling its humanitarian responsibilities.

a) Intelligence Collection and Surveillance

Enhancing security regarding Tibetan refugees in Nepal requires establishing a comprehensive intelligence and surveillance system to proactively identify and address potential threats. A strong intelligence network should be implemented to monitor activities within refugee settlements, enabling early detection of politically motivated protests, illegal trade operations and unauthorized movements. A participant in the FGD 2 suggested that

“Deploying undercover security personnel in strategic locations such as Tibetan refugee camps, religious sites and areas prone to protests, would enable discreet monitoring while reducing the risk of public disturbances” (FGD 2 Participant, Focus Group Discussion, 16 Jan., 2025).

While Analyzing the statement, Deploying undercover security personnel in key locations, such as Tibetan refugee camps, religious sites and protest-prone areas, enhances intelligence gathering and preventive threat mitigation. Covert monitoring allows authorities to identify

potential agitators, track the mobilization of protests and assess unwanted disturbance without provoking public unrest. This strategy reduces the likelihood of large-scale disturbances by enabling timely interventions before demonstrations escalate. Another participant from interview emphasized that

Gathering micro-level intelligence through local informants and technology-based surveillance, such as CCTV monitoring and digital tracking can help assess risks in advance. Strengthening coordination among Nepal Police (NP), the Armed Police Force (APF) Nepal and the National Investigation Department is essential for effectively addressing internal security threats (P 30, Interview, 15 Jan., 2025).

This statement describes, Micro-level intelligence gathering through local informants, CCTV surveillance and digital tracking enables early threat detection. Strengthening coordination among NP, APF, and the NID ensures a unified security response. Cyber intelligence monitoring of online activities linked to refugee movements and protests enhances proactive risk management. These intelligence-driven measures help Nepal mitigate security threats while maintaining internal security and social stability.

b) Legal and Policy Framework

The absence of a structured policy currently creates gaps in monitoring, security enforcement and law enforcement actions making it challenging for authorities to control their movements and activities. A well-defined legal framework would allow the government to distinguish between legitimate refugees and those potentially involved in politically or criminally motivated actions which help to ensure domestic security. To enhance security, FGD participants also highlighted that

FGD participants recommended establishing a clear and enforceable refugee policy to regulate the legal status of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. They emphasized the need for strict legal provisions to criminalize unauthorized protests, illegal activities and security breaches, particularly those involving anti-China slogans and self-immolation. Such activities disrupt public order and strain diplomatic ties with China and should be penalized through fines, imprisonment, or deportation for repeat offenders (FGD 1, FGD, 13 Jan, 2025).

By implementing these measures developing a legal framework for refugees, enforcing strict laws against protests and illegal activities, Nepal can strengthen its internal security while honoring its international responsibilities and preserving political neutrality in sensitive geopolitical matters.

c) Address Socio-Economic Challenges

The socio-economic integration of Tibetan refugees is vital for mitigating security concerns and fostering long-term stability in Nepal. Currently, many Tibetan refugees rely on informal economic activities due to their lack of legal recognition and limited access to formal employment. This dependence on unregulated work creates legal vulnerabilities, making them more prone to exploitation, while also contributing to economic tensions with local populations. To address these challenges, Nepal should implement policies that promote the self-reliance of refugees, enabling them to positively contribute to the economy rather than being seen as a burden.

One effective solution is to introduce vocational training programs tailored to the skills and interests of Tibetan refugees. Training in areas such as handicrafts, agriculture, sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship would allow refugees to build independent livelihoods. Collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies to fund and implement these programs can help ensure their success. By providing refugees with marketable skills, Nepal can reduce their reliance on informal employment while fostering economic self-sufficiency within the refugee community.

In addition to providing employment opportunities, community-based resource management initiatives can help ease socio-economic tensions between refugees and local Nepali populations. Shared activities like cooperative farming, agricultural projects and reforestation efforts can bring both communities together to manage resources like land and water. These initiatives promote mutual understanding, cooperation and sustainable practices benefiting both groups. For instance, allowing Tibetan refugees to engage in cooperative farming alongside local farmers helps ensure shared benefits and reduces competition.

Microfinance and small business development programs for refugee entrepreneurs can stimulate local economies and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid. By creating legal avenues for Tibetan refugees to start businesses, they can contribute to Nepal's economic development. Integrating refugees into Nepal's economic fabric through such structured

programs would turn potential security risks into economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities. Ultimately, a balanced approach focused on self-reliance, legal recognition and cooperative resource management can improve refugees' well-being, reduce illegal activities and strengthen Nepal's ability to manage refugee affairs sustainably.

d) Ensure Cultural and Religious Freedom

Imposing restrictions on Tibetan refugees' ability to practice their cultural and religious traditions has resulted in frustration and unrest. Allowing them to peacefully observe cultural and religious events, such as the Dalai Lama's birthday, would promote a sense of dignity and belonging within the refugee community. Nepal could establish platforms for open dialogue to better understand and address the concerns of the Tibetan population. Therefore, launching tolerance and awareness campaigns among the local population would help reduce cultural tensions, ensuring that Tibetan refugees are viewed as valuable members of Nepal's multicultural society rather than as potential threats. By establishing diplomatic consensus, it can be better solution for the refugees and host country.

e) Effective implication of Law and Order

To tackle criminal activities associated with refugee populations, Nepal should enhance its law enforcement capacity. Allocating more resources to areas with significant refugee populations and strengthening intelligence networks can help prevent crimes such as smuggling, forgery and fraud. Community policing efforts, where law enforcement collaborates closely with both refugees and local residents, can build trust and improve cooperation in maintaining law and order. Educating refugees about Nepal's laws and the consequences of criminal behavior can also discourage illegal activities and promote mutual understanding between refugees and authorities. One of the participants stated that

“To enhance the law enforcement, security forces should deploy intelligence in the Tibetan refugee area and regular monitoring, penalized if they are involved in crime strictly” (P 30,interview 15 Jan., 2025).

Key Informant describes, deploying intelligence in Tibetan refugee areas enhances law enforcement by enabling early threat detection and risk assessment. Regular monitoring through surveillance and informants helps identify criminal activities and prevent unrest. Strict penalization for crimes reinforces deterrence while maintaining rule of law.

f) Strengthening the Capacity of Security Forces

Nepal's security forces are crucial in managing refugee populations but they often lack the necessary training for such a delicate responsibility. Providing specialized training in refugee activities, international law and cultural sensitivity, use of modern technologies enhance the ability of security forces to address refugee-related issues more effectively and thoughtfully. Improved coordination between the NP, APF and other government agencies ensure a unified approach to dealing with refugee challenges. Similarly, security personnel should be trained to manage illegal activities such as protests or large-scale refugee arrivals in a way that avoids excessive force and unnecessary conflict. One of the participant stated that

To strengthen security forces, it's crucial to provide enhanced training, modern resources like communication systems, familiarize with new technology and foster strong leadership. Promoting interagency collaboration improves coordination, while prioritizing mental health support ensures resilience and effective performance under stress (P28, Interview, 13 Jan, 2025)

Strengthening the capacity of security forces is essential in minimizing internal security threats and ensuring a stable environment. By enhancing their training, equipping them with modern resources and fostering strong leadership, security personnel are better prepared to handle challenging situations. Similarly, promoting interagency collaboration improves coordination and response effectiveness. Focusing on the mental health and well-being of security forces is equally important, as it helps boost morale and motivation, enabling them to perform their duties with resilience and dedication in difficult circumstances.

g) Developing Sustainable Refugee Settlement

Nepal should focus on establishing sustainable refugee settlements that offer housing, healthcare, education and vocational training. These settlements would provide refugees with a stable environment, reducing their reliance on informal or illegal activities. Public-private partnerships can be utilized to fund and manage these settlements, ensuring they are well-maintained and efficient. Such systems would not only improve the living conditions of refugees but also minimize their impact on local communities and infrastructure, promoting long-term social and economic harmony.

h) Issuing Temporary Cards

Providing temporary cards to refugees can play a crucial role in improving their livelihoods while facilitating effective data collection. Such cards would serve as an official form of identification, granting refugees access to essential services like education, healthcare and formal employment, while enabling authorities to maintain accurate records for better resource allocation and policy planning. During the interview, one of the participants further stated that

“Nepal should continue issuing the RC to remaining refugee, it will facilitate in day today livelihood of the community, including free movement, better working opportunity, health care and education facilities”(P 14, Interview, 8 Jan., 2025).

Analyzing the statement of participant, issuing temporary card to the remaining Tibetan refugees in Nepal is a crucial step toward improving their legal status and socio-economic integration. Providing RCs ensures access to fundamental rights, including freedom of movement, employment opportunities, healthcare and education, reducing their vulnerability to exploitation and illegal activities. Legal recognition can also enhance law enforcement’s ability to monitor and regulate refugee activities, mitigating potential security risks

i) Refugee Resettlement and Third-Country Solutions

A viable and sustainable solution to the Tibetan refugee issue is resettlement in third countries. Nepal can collaborate with international organizations and countries such as the U.S., Canada and various European nations to support the resettlement of eligible Tibetan refugees. This approach would help alleviate the strain on Nepal’s resources while offering refugees improved opportunities for a better life. At the same time, Nepal should remain open to the possibility of voluntary repatriation if conditions in Tibet improve, ensuring that any repatriation efforts are carried out safely and in accordance with international standards.

j) International Advocacy and Cooperation

Addressing the Tibetan refugee issue requires support from the international community. Collaboration with the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations would help Nepal secure the financial and technical assistance needed to manage refugees effectively. Advocating at international forums can help raise awareness of the challenges Nepal faces and encourage other nations to contribute to the shared responsibility of resettling Tibetan

refugees. Strengthening regional cooperation with neighboring countries like India further enhance efforts to address refugee issues in a comprehensive and fair manner.

Likewise, a comprehensive refugee policy should include provisions for governance oversight, ensuring that INGOs and humanitarian agencies providing assistance to Tibetan refugees operate in alignment with Nepal's national security framework. While humanitarian support is crucial, unregulated aid distribution and foreign involvement in refugee issues could unintentionally foster political activism. FGD participants recommended that

The Nepal government may consider establishing a regulatory body to oversee INGO activities in refugee camps, ensuring that humanitarian aid is provided responsibly and does not unintentionally impact Nepal's security or diplomatic relations (FGD2, 16 Jan 2025)

k) Strengthen Border Security

A major security concern arises from the delicate regional dynamics and border challenges linked to Tibetan refugee movements. Due to the, Nepal's location between China and India, unauthorized border crossings create significant security risks. Nepal's northern and western borders, especially in remote mountainous areas, are difficult to monitor, making unregulated migration easier. To address this, it is important to strengthen border surveillance, regulate refugee movements and prevent illegal entries and exits. These measures will help maintain Nepal's internal stability.

Nepal's difficult terrain and long borders make it challenging for security agencies to monitor Tibetan refugee movements effectively. To improve border security, Participant suggested that

Increasing the number of security personnel, including the APF Nepal, at key border points, along with installing surveillance cameras and utilizing modern monitoring technology on frequently used routes, can enhance tracking and intelligence gathering. Setting up more border security posts in high-risk areas and deploying undercover security personnel can also help detect unauthorized refugee movements and suspicious activities (P29, interview, 18 Jan., 2025).

This suggestion focus that Enhancing border security by increasing APF Nepal personnel, utilizing modern monitoring technology, strengthening intelligence and threat detection,

establishing additional security posts in high-risk areas improves control over unauthorized refugee movements and potential security breaches. Deploying undercover personnel further aids in identifying suspicious activities without escalating tensions. These measures collectively enhance border management, ensuring national security while balancing humanitarian considerations.

Strengthening security checkpoints along major refugee transit routes is another important step. One of the Key Informant Interview participant recommended that

Nepal needs to enforce stricter visa and permit regulations for Tibetan refugees traveling between Nepal, India and Tibet. Mandatory identity verification at border checkpoints, along with increased inspections and random checks at known crossing points, would help prevent unauthorized entries and reduce risks associated with illegal border crossings (KII 1, 14 Jan., 2025)

This statement tells that Tibetan refugees often use Nepal as a transit route, raising concerns about undocumented movements and potential infiltration. To improve border security, joint patrols with Chinese authorities in northern areas could help prevent illegal crossings. A centralized system to track refugee movements would enable better monitoring and identification of high-risk individuals, reducing the risk of infiltration and improving oversight.

The increasing number of unauthorized entries and exits by undocumented individuals, including those who may exploit refugee settlements for political activism or illegal trade. Strengthening border control mechanisms is necessary to prevent such activities. One of the FGD member stated that

“The introduction of biometric identification systems to track the movements of Tibetan refugees more efficiently. This would ensure that only documented refugees with legal status are allowed to travel between different locations in Nepal” (FGD 1, FGD, 13 Jan., 2025).

As FGD member, from a governance perspective, biometric systems can enhance the efficiency of refugee management by ensuring that only legally recognized refugees can move between locations. This could help prevent identity fraud, unauthorized movement, and potential security risks. It also enables Nepalese authorities to maintain more accurate records of refugees, which could streamline the provision of aid and resources.

By implementing these measures, enhancing border surveillance, regulating refugee movements, strengthening security checkpoints, and enforcing strict legal provisions, Nepal can effectively manage security threats associated with Tibetan refugees while ensuring diplomatic stability with China and India.

I) Geopolitical Diplomacy

Given Nepal's delicate diplomatic position between China and other influential nations, it is essential for the country to carefully balance its relationships. To address the Tibetan refugee issue effectively, Nepal should engage in diplomatic discussions with China to alleviate pressures regarding Tibetan activism, while simultaneously asserting its sovereignty over domestic policies. This approach would allow Nepal to manage its internal affairs without compromising on its international relationships. During the interview, participant stated that

Nepal faces various challenges related to security threats, including the presence and activities of external elements, illegal border crossings despite its non-signatory policy, civil unrest, border sensitivity, diplomatic pressure and external influences. Addressing these concerns requires effective mechanisms such as counterterrorism and extremism prevention, promoting political stability and implementing governance reforms and maintain diplomacy to ensure peace and stability in the country (P 29, interview, 18 Jan, 2025).

As per the key informant, Nepal is confronted with significant security challenges, including the influence of external elements, illegal border crossings despite its non-signatory policy, civil unrest, and heightened border sensitivities. The country also faces diplomatic pressures and external influences that further complicate its security landscape. To address these issues, the key informant emphasizes the need for robust counterterrorism and extremism prevention measures, fostering political stability and initiating governance reforms..

Similarly, Nepal can strengthen its cooperation with Western countries and international organizations to secure both financial and technical support for refugee management. By adopting proactive and thoughtful diplomacy, Nepal can ensure that its position is clearly communicated and respected by all stakeholders. This approach would minimize the likelihood of external interference while fostering internal stability and peace.

4.1.4 Objective Wise Discussion

a) Findings with respect to the objective one; to assess the present status of Tibetan refugee particularly focusing on livelihood, employment, business, etc. in Nepal

The review of literatures and findings highlight the legal and identity-related problems of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, particularly regarding livelihood, employment, and business opportunities. Studies by Karki (2016) and Manandhar (2021) emphasize the issue of statelessness, noting that generations of Tibetan refugees born in Nepal remain without formal recognition. Similarly, Shahi (2018) and Schwartz (2024) argue that Nepal's legal framework and political inconsistencies prevent Tibetan refugees from obtaining citizenship or official refugee status. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (2023) reports that China's influence has led Nepal to execute stricter regulations, further restricting Tibetan refugees' freedom of movement and expression. Findings confirm these challenges, highlighting travel restrictions, the inability to open bank accounts or establish businesses, and exclusion from public services due to their undocumented status.

Similarly, access to education and healthcare presents another significant challenge. Karki (2016) and Shahi (2018) note that the lack of documentation limits school enrollment and access to medical services. Manandhar (2021) further discusses how young Tibetans struggle to pursue higher education, often being compelled into informal or family-run businesses due to these barriers. The findings support these claims, indicating that Tibetan refugees face enrollment difficulties, higher education fees, and inadequate healthcare. Their lack of legal recognition prevents them from benefiting from Nepal's public services, worsening their socio-economic struggles.

Employment and economic integration are also major concerns. Karki (2016) and Shahi (2018) point out that legal restrictions prevent Tibetan refugees from securing formal jobs, forcing them into low-paying, informal employment without legal protections. Schwartz (2024) highlights how Nepal's policies limit economic opportunities, making it difficult for Tibetan refugees to establish connections within local communities. Manandhar (2021) notes that many young Tibetans resort to using falsified documents to access work and carry out daily activities. The findings emphasize these perspectives, revealing that Tibetan refugees face employment restrictions, lack business ownership rights, and experience financial instability. Without access to formal employment, they remain trapped in poverty with little opportunity for economic progress.

Beyond economic adversities, Tibetan refugees also experience social and political marginalization. Malla (2009) explores the psychological and social problems they face while preserving their Tibetan identity, while Karki (2016) highlights mobility restrictions that limit their social integration. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (2023) further explains that increased surveillance and monitoring of cultural expression make it difficult for Tibetan refugees to maintain their tradition. Findings support these claims, pointing to social exclusion, travel restrictions, and political ambiguity as ongoing difficulties.

Both the literature and findings confirm that Tibetan refugees in Nepal face legal uncertainty, economic adversity, and socio-political marginalization. The combined impact of Nepal's limiting policies, China's influence, and the absence of legal recognition creates an environment in which Tibetan refugees struggle to access education, employment, and basic rights.

b) Findings with respect to the objective two; to explore the threats posed by Tibetan refugees at the micro and macro levels of Nepal's internal security.

The literature explores the complex relationship between Tibetan refugees' legal uncertainty and security concerns. Adhikari (2015) and Dhondup (2018) highlight how socio-economic hardships and legal ambiguity push some Tibetan refugees toward illicit activities such as smuggling, illegal border crossings, and document forgery. Bhattarai (2015) discusses Nepal's challenge in managing Tibetan refugee policies amid pressure from both China and the international community. The findings align with these arguments, revealing that the involvement of some Tibetan refugees in criminal activities pose threats for law enforcement and internal security of Nepal. The lack of legal recognition and economic opportunities forces many into survival strategies that contribute to broader security concerns.

Another key issue is the demographic shift and its potential impact on internal security. Rigzin (2024) suggests that the declining Tibetan refugee population in South Asia may indirectly contribute to security challenges in Nepal, as the growing presence of refugees from other conflict-prone regions could lead to increased socio-political tensions. Ghosh (2019) examines refugee movements as a non-traditional security threat, showing how host countries influence refugee crises for geopolitical and domestic policy purposes. Findings support these perspectives, highlighting concerns over border security and law enforcement

difficulties. Nepal's strategic location makes it vulnerable to external influences, particularly from China, which closely monitors Tibetan refugee activities.

Nepal's legal and policy framework remains a key challenge. The UNDP (1994) promotes a human security framework that prioritizes individual well-being over state-centric security concerns, an approach echoed by Rasul (2018) and Amnesty International (2021). Findings highlight the risks of Tibetan refugees due to their lack of legal status, which leaves them vulnerable to exploitation, exclusion from essential services, and socio-economic marginalization. This underscores the need for policy reforms that address both security and humanitarian considerations.

Geopolitical factors play a crucial role in shaping Nepal's approach to Tibetan refugees. Bhattarai (2015) and Rigzin (2024) explain that Nepal's refugee policies are heavily influenced by its diplomatic relationship with China, which views Tibetan activism as a security threat. Findings confirm that Nepal's policies are shaped by unseen factors, making it difficult to develop independent refugee policies. Competition for resources and restrictions on employment contribute to inter-ethnic tensions and political instability. Moving forward, Nepal should adopt a balanced approach that safeguards national security while upholding refugee rights.

Comparing between the literature and findings reveal that Tibetan refugees in Nepal face a multidimensional problems involving legal uncertainty, economic hardship, security risks, and geopolitical challenges. While the literature provides a theoretical framework for these issues, the findings confirm their real-world impact, particularly in law enforcement, human security, and policy gaps. Addressing these concerns requires a balance approach that integrates legal recognition, economic opportunities, and security measures while maintaining internal security and diplomatic relation.

c) Findings with respect to the objective three; to identify the implementation measures for strengthening internal security of Nepal.

The findings align with existing literatures regarding the socio-economic, legal, and security challenges Tibetan refugees face in Nepal. Rigzin (2024) highlights the demographic decline of the Tibetan refugee population and its potential implications for internal security, emphasizing the need for careful policy management. This supports the findings that Nepal should balance security concerns with humanitarian obligations to prevent socio-political tensions and economic instability. Similarly, Dolma et al. (2006) documents severe human

rights violations, including mistreatment and extortion, which reinforce the findings that stronger protections and legal recognition are necessary to safeguard refugee rights.

From a socio-economic perspective, Karki (2016) found that 90% of Tibetan refugees struggle with unemployment, restricted access to education, and inadequate healthcare. This is consistent with the findings that emphasize the need for vocational training, financial assistance, and expanded socio-economic opportunities to improve refugee livelihoods.

A major problem is the absence of a comprehensive legal framework. Sharma (2015) notes that Nepal's Constitution (2015) does not obviously recognize refugee rights, only perform host duty, leaving Tibetan refugees vulnerable under laws such as the Foreigners Act (1958) and Immigration Act (1992). These laws fail to differentiate between refugees and undocumented immigrants, exposing them to deportation, detention and restricted access to essential services. Findings reinforce this issue, stressing the need for legal recognition, socio-economic reforms and protective law enforcement. Jones (2023) highlights how Nepal's economic reliance on China has led to increased influence, including repatriations and dominance of cultural and religious freedoms. Findings similarly advocate for stronger legal protections, improved law enforcement, and international co-operation.

Security concerns surrounding Tibetan refugees also have broader geopolitical implications. Mogire (2016) argues that refugees are often perceived as threats to stability of the nation. Findings emphasize the need to balance enhanced border security and intelligence measures with humanitarian responsibilities. International advocacy and cooperation are critical in addressing these challenges. Sharma (2015) notes that Nepal's unwillingness to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention limits global support for refugee rights. Findings indicate that actively engaging with international organizations may assist Nepal in addressing security concerns while ensuring the protection of human rights.

Nepal's policies toward Tibetan refugees are primarily driven by security and geopolitical concerns, particularly its relationship with China. Realism and securitization theory explain why diplomatic and economic interests often take precedence over refugee rights, leading to surveillance, legal uncertainty, and cultural restrictions. The lack of legal protections further worsen these challenges. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive legal provision, improved international cooperation and policies that balance security with human rights. Strengthening border security and expanding socio-economic opportunities, diplomatic dialogue with global organizations can help addressing these challenges effectively.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

Nepal has a long history of offering refuge to displaced populations, including Tibetan refugees, despite not being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, the absence of a formal legal framework to govern refugee status has led to numerous challenges for both refugees and the host country. Tibetan refugees in Nepal face legal uncertainties that limit their access to education, employment, financial services, and freedom of movement. This situation has marginalized them, often compelling them into informal economies and in some cases, leading them to engage in illegal activities for survival which create the internal security threats to Nepal.

The objective of this study is to assess the current status of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, focusing on their legal recognition, settlement patterns, access to services and livelihood opportunities. It also examines the internal security threats posed by the Tibetan refugee population, particularly regarding illegal activities, border security vulnerabilities, and geopolitical condition. The study seeks to develop measures for strengthening security mechanisms in Nepal to address these refugee-related challenges while ensuring national stability. These objectives provide a structured framework for analyzing the intersection of refugee management and national security.

To achieve these objectives, the researcher uses a qualitative research design that incorporates both primary and secondary data sources. Field visits were conducted in key Tibetan refugee settlements in Pokhara, Kathmandu, and Lalitpur, where in-depth interviews were held with Tibetan refugees, local inhabitants, government officials, and UNHCR representatives. Focus Group Discussions were also held with district security committees to gather their perspectives on refugee-related security concerns. Similarly, Key informant interviews were conducted with government officials to acquire depth information about security threats and measures to strengthen security mechanism as well. Secondary data was collected from government reports, policy documents, news articles, and academic literature to provide additional context and validate findings from primary research. The study follows

a descriptive and analytical research design, combining firsthand accounts with policy analysis to present a comprehensive view of the Tibetan refugee problems in Nepal.

The study identifies Nepal's refugee policy gap as a crucial factor contributing to insecurity and social instability. The lack of official documentation, such as Refugee Cards (RCs), deprives from many Tibetan refugees of basic rights and exposes them to exploitation. Since the government stopped issuing new RCs in 1995, younger generations of Tibetan refugees have remained stateless, limiting their opportunities for a stable future and often leading them to seek migration to third countries. Their inability to obtain Nepali citizenship, despite being born and raised in Nepal, has caused frustration and social marginalization. The study also highlights that Tibetan refugees have limited access to essential services like higher education, healthcare, and financial opportunities further worsening their socio-economic condition.

Beyond these socio-economic problems, the study also explores security issues linked to the presence of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Concerns have been raised regarding identity fraud and border security due to reports of fraudulent documentation, including the unlawful acquisition of Nepali citizenship and passports. Some Tibetan refugees have been connected in criminal activities such as gold and drug smuggling, illegal gambling and document forgery which could threaten internal security of Nepal.

The lack of effective oversight has allowed illicit trade networks to flourish, making it necessary for law enforcement agencies to strengthen surveillance and security implementation. Tibetan refugee-related protests, particularly during significant cultural and political events have led to heighten security measures, mass arrests and diplomatic tensions between Nepal and China. Similarly, the study explores Nepal's border security vulnerabilities, noting unauthorized border crossings from Tibet and India as growing challenges. Increased Chinese scrutiny has pressured Nepal to implement stricter border controls to curb unauthorized Tibetan migration, diverting attention and resources from other border security issues like smuggling and human trafficking.

Given these challenges, the study recommends based on the literatures and findings that Nepal adopt a balanced approach to ensure security stability while aligning its refugee policies with international human rights standards. The study suggests strengthening border security, use of modern technologies, surveillances, improving legal oversight to prevent fraudulent documentation, and enhancing intelligence-sharing between security agencies as

critical measures to address security risks. Simultaneously, Nepal should consider revising its policies to grant legal recognition to Tibetan refugees, providing them with access to essential services employment opportunities and strict legal provision for the criminal activities. The study advocates for the adoption of a formal refugee policy, in collaboration with international organizations like the UNHCR to help Nepal balance security concerns with its humanitarian responsibilities.

5.2 Conclusion

The study emphasizes the problems associated with the status of Tibetan refugees and internal security threats to Nepal. It highlights the absence of a formal refugee policy which has resulted in the legal uncertainty and marginalization of Tibetan refugees. This lack of recognition has hindered their access to essential services such as education, employment and healthcare while also creating a generational divide. Since the stopping of Refugee Cards in 1995, younger generations of Tibetan refugees have found themselves in a stateless position further limiting their opportunities for long-term integration into Nepalese society. This exclusion has compelled many refugees into the informal economy, where they often face frustration and dissatisfaction. In some cases, this marginalization has led to their involvement in illegal activities such as document forgery, smuggling, and obtaining counterfeit Nepali citizenship.

Human Security framework developed by UNDP (1994) emphasizes the importance of protecting individuals from threats that affect their well-being, including economic, social, and political insecurities. The lack of a formal refugee policy in Nepal, as highlighted in the study, undermines the human security of Tibetan refugees. The absence of legal recognition, limited access to essential services such as education, employment, and healthcare, and the marginalization of younger generations reflect significant human security concerns. These issues make it difficult for refugees to achieve a stable and prosperous life, compelling many into the informal economy which exacerbates feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction. Similarly, the statelessness experienced by these refugees limits their ability to fully integrate into Nepalese society, increasing their vulnerability and insecurity.

Securitization Theory developed by Buzan et al. (1998) posits that security threats are constructed through discourse and political action. From this perspective, the challenges posed by Tibetan refugees in Nepal can be viewed as a form of securitization, where the refugees' status is framed as a potential threat to national security. The study discusses the

internal security risks posed by the unregulated status of Tibetan refugees and the strain placed on Nepal's security forces due to political protests and demonstrations related to Tibetan activism. The diplomatic relations with China and managing internal security concerns further exemplifies the process of securitization, where the issue of Tibetan refugees is framed as a matter of national security. This framing results in the marginalization of refugees and in some cases their involvement in illicit activities such as document forgery, smuggling etc.

The study provides a comprehensive overview of the problems faced by Tibetan refugees in Nepal, particularly in relation to internal security, human rights, and diplomacy. By drawing on human security theory and securitization theory, the researcher can better understand the relationship between humanitarian concerns and internal security matters. The lack of a clear refugee policy and the marginalization of Tibetan refugees present difficulties not only for their well-being but also for Nepal's social and political stability. The study emphasizes the need for a more structured approach to refugee management that addresses both the humanitarian needs of refugees and the security concerns of Nepal.

From a security perspective, the study highlights the threats posed by the unregulated status of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. The lack of effective monitoring by authorities can lead to potential security risks. Similarly, frequent political protests and demonstrations associated with Tibetan activism place extra burden on security forces, contributing to maintain law-and-order. Nepal's strategic location between China and India further complicates these issues. Managing security concerns related to Tibetan activism while maintaining diplomatic relations with both neighboring countries presents an ambiguity for the Nepal government.

The researcher focuses on understanding the current status of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, threats posed by refugees to internal security and potential measures to strengthen security mechanisms. The Nepal's lack of a clear refugee policy not only represents a humanitarian concern but also indicates a governance gap with long-term implications for both social stability and internal security.

To address these issues, the study identifies several key recommendation measures. These include assessing the livelihood status of Tibetan refugees, investigating the internal security threats they present at both the micro and macro levels and exploring potential solutions to strengthen security measures. The study advocates for a more structured approach to managing refugee populations that integrates humanitarian efforts with the need for national

security. Key recommendations include the establishment of a better legal framework for refugees, enhanced border security measures, and more robust surveillance and monitoring systems.

Therefore, the researcher suggests that without a comprehensive and sustainable refugee policy, Nepal may continue to face internal security challenges. If left unaddressed, these issues could escalate, resulting in more significant security and diplomatic complications. It is crucial for Nepal to adopt a balanced approach that considers both the humanitarian needs of refugees and the country's security concerns. Implementing such a strategy would help safeguard human rights while ensuring the stability and peace of the nation.

APPENDIX “A”

(Refer to page No. 21)

Details of Study: Participants of Interview

Participants	Gender	Post/designation/other	Age	Place	Education
Participant 1	M	Tibetan Refugee	76	Kaski	NO
Participant 2	M	Tibetan Refugee	85	Kaski	No
Participant 3	M	Tibetan Refugee	89	Kaski	No
Participant 4	M	Tibetan Refugee	52	Kaski	Simple Literate
Participant 5	M	Tibetan Refugee	30	Kaski	Bachelor
Participant 6	F	Tibetan Refugee	63	Kaski	Simple Literate
Participant 7	M	Tibetan Refugee	94	Kaski	No
Participant 8	F	Tibetan Refugee	38	Kaski	Camp Education
Participant 9	M	Tibetan Refugee	63	Kaski	Simple Literate
Participant 10	M	Local Resident	49	Kaski	SLC
Participant 11	M	Tibetan Refugee	72	Kaski	Simple Literate
Participant 12	M	Tibetan Refugee	36	Kaski	Camp Education
Participant 13	F	Tibetan Refugee	69	Kaski	No
Participant 14	M	Tibetan Refugee	55	Kaski	Simple Literate
Participant 15	M	Tibetan Refugee	74	Kaski	No
Participant 16	F	Local Resident	34	Kaski	University Education
Participant 17	M	Local Resident	55	Kaski	Literate

Participant 18	M	Tibetan Refugee	68	Kathmandu	Simple Literate
Participant 19	M	Tibetan Refugee	40	Kathmandu	Camp Education
Participant 20	M	Local Businessman	42	Kathmandu	Bachelor Pass
Participant 21	F	Tibetan Refugee	23	Kathmandu	Camp Education
Participant 22	M	Tibetan Refugee	33	Lalitpur	Camp Education
Participant 23	M	Tibetan Refugee	43	Lalitpur	Camp Education
Participant 24	M	Local Resident	27	Lalitpur	Intermediate
Participant 25	M	Tibetan Refugee	91	Lalitpur	No
Participant 26	F	Local Resident	58	Lalitpur	Simple Literate
Participant 27	F	Tibetan Refugee	26	Lalitpur	Camp Education
Participant 28	M	CDO, Pokhara	-	DAO Kaski, Pokhara	-
Participant 29	M	Foreign Secretary	-	Kathmandu	-
Participant 30	M	Assistant CDO	-	DAO, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur	-

Details of the FGD-1 in District Administration Office , Kaski		
FGD 1	Chief District Officer	Kaski
FGD 1	Colonel ,Nepal Army	Kaski
FGD 1	SP, District Police Office	Kaski
FGD 1	SP, APF Number 24 Bn	Kaski
FGD 1	Deputy Investigation Director	Kaski
FGD 1	Assistant CDO	Kaski
Details of Key Informant Interview		
KII 1	Former Home Secretary	Kathmandu
KII 2	Secretary(Ward-25) ,Pokhara	Kaski
KII 3	Employee of DAO, Pokhara	Pokhara
Details of the FGD 2 District Administration Office , Kathmandu		
FGD 2	Chief District Officer	Kathmandu
FGD 2	Colonel, Nepal Army	Kathmandu
FGD 2	SSP, District Police Range	Kathmandu
FGD 2	SPs, APF Number 19/20 Bn	Kathmandu
FGD 2	Joint Investigation Director	Kathmandu
FGD 2	Assistant CDO	Kathmandu

APPENDIX “B”

(Refer to page No. 21)

Tibetan Refugee and Impact on Internal Security of Nepal

Questions for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the District Security Committee of Kaski and Kathmandu

- Name:
- Rank
- Appointment
- Name of the Organization

Questions:

- Could you briefly introduce yourself and your role within the District Security Committee?
- What is your assessment of the status of Tibetan refugees in Kaski /Kathmandu, in terms of their social, economic, and legal conditions?
- Have there been any recorded incidents of security threats or illegal activities involving Tibetan refugees (e.g., smuggling, protests, or other criminal activities)?
- How significant do you think the Tibetan refugees' presence is in creating internal security impact to Nepal?
- How does the District Security Committee collaborate with other stakeholders to address security challenges related to refugees?
- What are the ways of enhancing security mechanism to overcome the internal security problem to Nepal?

APPENDIX “C”

(Refer to page No. 21)

Interview Questions for Tibetan Refugees

The following questions are part of **Tibetan Refugee and Impact on Internal security of Nepal** A field study in Kaski, Lalitpur and Kathmandu conducted by Bashudev Mahat, student of Master in Security, Development and Peace Studies (MSDPS) at APF Command and Staff College Sanogaucharan, Kathmandu. Your answer will provide invaluable information about status in term of livelihood, access of education, health facilities, travel, economy, business and other details. I assure you that your participation in this interview is completely voluntarily, if you do not take part in the interview, or if there are any particular questions you do not wish to answer. All personal information shared will remain secret. The confidentiality of your participation will be maintained.

- Name: _____ Age: _____
- Gender: _____ Education: _____

Research Question:

- When did you or your family arrive in Nepal?
- Are you registered as a refugee in Nepal?
- How would you describe your living conditions?
- Do you have access to education, healthcare and other essential services if not what challenges do you face?
- Do you receive any support from Tibetan refugee community, NGO or the government of Nepal?
- What are the primary challenges you face in earning a livelihood?
- Have you faced any discrimination or exclusion as a refugee?
- What challenges do you face due to the lack of legal recognition as a citizen?
- Have you or your community faced any security issues in Nepal? If, yes please elaborate?
- Have there been any conflicts or misunderstanding with local communities or law enforcement?

APPENDIX “D”**(Refer to page No. 21)****Questions for Key Informant Interview (KII) with different stake holders**

- Name:
- Rank
- Appointment
- Name of the Organization

Research Question:

- What is your assessment of the status of Tibetan refugees, in Nepal?
- How the Tibetan Refugee impact on internal security of Nepal?
- What are the security measures to strengthen the internal security of Nepal?
- How do you provide services to Tibetan refugees at the District Administration Office, such as the renewal of refugee cards and other essential documents?
- How do you provide services to Tibetan refugees at the ward Office, such as recommendation letter and other essential documents?

APPENDIX “E”

(Refer to page No. 21)

Glimpses of Field Visit**Focus Group Discussion -1, at DAO Pokhara, Kaski****Focus Group Discussion-2, at DAO, Kathmandu**

Interview with assistant CDO, DAO, Lalitpur



Key Informant Interview at DAO, Pokhara, Kaski



KII with Ward Secretary in Hemja, Pokhara



Interview with Tibetan refugees at Katmandu, Lalitpur and Kaski





Spoiled Refugees Cards



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