

UNIT 51 – UPSC - Security challenges and their management in border areas

Governments of numerous nations make huge investment and provide good support for the border security. Still, border and maritime security continues to present challenges to governments around the world. The proper management of borders presents many challenges and includes coordination and concerted action by administrative, diplomatic, security, intelligence, legal, regulatory and economic agencies of the country to secure the frontiers and sub serve its best interests. With a continent of sub-continental proportions, India occupies a major strategic position in Southern Asia and governs the northern Indian Ocean with a coastline that is 7,683 km long, and an Exclusive Economic Zone that is over two million square km in size. India's land borders exceed 15,000 km which it shares with seven countries including a small segment with Afghanistan (106 km) in northern Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).



It has been established by security experts that good management of borders is extremely important for national safety. In India, borders are extended to different portions which create many issues and these issues must be appropriately addressed. These problems have become intensified currently with Pakistan's policy of cross- border terrorism, along with its strongly hostile anti-India publicity designed to misinform and power the reliabilities of the border population. The increase of cross-border terrorism, targeted to weaken India, also pose main challenges for border management strategy. The Department of Border Management was created in the Ministry of Home Affairs in January, 2004 to pay focused attention to the issues relating to management of international land and coastal borders, strengthening of border policing and safeguarding, creation of infrastructure like roads, fencing and flood lighting of borders and implementation of Border Area Development Programme.

The term border management must be understood in its broadest sense and should infer co-ordination and concentrated action by political leadership and administrative, diplomatic, security, intelligence, legal, regulatory and economic agencies of the country to secure Indian boundaries the best interests of the country. From this perspective, the management of borders offers many challenging problems. Numerous factors like globalisation, media uprising and technological development in various fields have hugely impacted the border management

framework. Now more comprehensive planning is needed to attain peace and progress on borders. Geocentricity of India and the fear of the smaller neighbouring States of India's size, economic resources and military strength has impacted on communal relations. India faces military and non-military threats from all countries with land borders. Land borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh have observed rapid security affecting changes. Borders with Myanmar and Nepal are also causing serious concern. Pakistan and India have fought four wars over the issue of J&K (Sanjay Singh, 2005). The problems continue and proxy war unchecked to wrest J&K continues. Without peaceful borders with its neighbours, India can hardly play its appropriate role in global matters at this time of seminal global change. Currently, there are many problems on the border management regardless of the security measures in order to combat cross border terrorism.

The theory of border security has changed with the increasing vulnerability of the coastline and also of the airspace. With gradual expansion and strengthening of security, the lawbreaker is already on the look-out for soft gaps, either on the land or along the coast and if need be, from the air. The offenders, with unprecedented money power, access to modern technology, organisational strength, manoeuvrability and scope for strategic alliances with other compatible groups, can choose their theatre of action for surprise attacks. While land borders have from time to time received Government's attention mainly because of the wars with Pakistan and China and the problems of insurgence, illegal migration from Bangladesh and smuggling actions. Rebellious groups in various parts of the country are receiving foreign support and inspiration. Illegal penetration and smuggling of arms and explosives, narcotics and counterfeit currency are persistent problems. The absorbency of borders in many parts, makes the task of the anti-national forces much easier. All this activities emphasises the need for extreme vigilance on the borders and strengthening the border guarding militaries.

In India, when reviewing thoroughly management of borders, the Kargil Review Committee had concerned about land borders. The Group of Ministers (GoM), realized that the scope of such a review should be broader and apart from including the land borders, should also include management mechanisms designed to safeguard the safety of coastal areas and airspace. By doing this exercise, the GoM was assisted by a multi-disciplinary task force. Based on the report of the task force and the ensuing deliberations, the GoM made a series of recommendations designed to better manage our borders, coastline and airspace. Some of the major issues bothering the management of borders include maritime boundaries. Maritime boundaries are still undefined and much of land borders are not determined on the ground. The disputed and unsettled nature of boundaries has made them a source of tension with their policing much more problematic. Since most of Indian borders are man-made artificial boundaries and not based on natural features such as rivers and watersheds, they are very permeable and easy to cross. Diversity of forces on the same borders has unavoidably led to the lack of accountability as well as problems of command and control. Border Guarding Forces must have to be distinguished from central police organisations. They need to be properly strengthened both in terms of equipment and manpower.

The forces antagonistic to India have tended to occupy the vacuum created by inadequate reach of the national media. To fight terrorism and revolt, security forces are called upon to take tough measures. These measures may sometime cause trouble and infuriation to the local people. This sense of dissatisfaction is misused by hostile elements to create a feeling of ill will against the security forces and the Government. When media releases information at appropriate time, it would help in combating such unenviable publicity of the elements hostile to India. Due to the

sensitive nature of their responsibilities, the interaction of the bureaucrats of the security agencies and security forces with the media has necessarily to remain limited. Though, specialized officers, properly equipped and trained may communicate information to the media. The concept of Village Volunteer Forces helping in border management has a great deal to commend itself and has worked with huge success in areas where it has been tried so far.

Information about the length of India's land borders with its neighbours:

Bangladesh:	4,339	km	(4,351	km	as	per	MoD2).
Bhutan:	605	km	(700	km	as	per	MoD).
China:	3,439	km	(4,056	km	as	per	MoD).
Myanmar:	1,425	km	(1,643	km	as	per	MoD).
Nepal:	1,690	km	(1,751	km	as	per	MoD).
Pakistan:	3,325 km (3,244 km as per MoD).						

Additionally, India has a land border with Afghanistan as well. Nevertheless, currently, the area bordering Afghanistan falls in the Northern Areas of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Due to the inclination of India's neighbours to exploit India's nation building problems, the country's internal security challenges are intricately connected with border management. The challenge of coping with long-standing regional and boundary clashes with China and Pakistan, combined with permeable borders along some of the most difficult landscape in the world, has made tremendously effective border management compulsory. In spite of several border wars and conflicts, India's borders continue to be operated by huge number of military, para-military and police forces, each of which has its own beliefs, and each of which reports to a different central ministry at New Delhi, with almost no real co-ordination to manage the borders. External threats to India's security are not the only border management issue to be dealt with at present by the national security apparatus. India's rate of growth has far outperformed that of most of its neighbours which has created peculiar problems such as:

1. Mass immigrations into India.
2. Augmented cross-border terrorism.
3. Penetration and ex-filtration of armed militants.
4. Emergence of non-state actors.
5. Link between narcotics and arms smugglers.
6. Unlawful migrations.
7. Left-wing radicalism.
8. Separatist movements aided and abetted by external powers.
9. Establishment of madrasas, which could result in security hazards.
10. Smugglers, drug-traffickers are often in association with local offenders, lower rung political leaders and police officials.

These type of situations worsen the challenges of border management and the border guarding agencies face more complex problems. It is obvious that poor border management inexorably results in a volatile internal security situation in the Border States of the nation. The engagement of various forces results in problems of command and control as well as the lack of accountability for violations, poor intelligence and incompetent handling of local sensitivities.

Staffing the Line of Actual Control with China:

The Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China is a lively example of the lack of synchronisation in border management. The western sector of the LAC in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh and the central sector along the Uttarakhand border are staffed by some Vikas battalions of the Special Frontier Force which reports to the Cabinet Secretariat and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police that is a Ministry of Home Affairs police force, correspondingly. Infantry battalions of the Indian Army man the Sikkim border and units of the Assam Rifles (AR) man the Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram borders. The Assam Rifles is a para-military force under the Ministry of Home Affairs that is officered mostly by regular army officers. Its battalions have been placed under 'operational control' of local army formation commanders. Though the responsibility is that of the army, the Assam Rifles battalions given to the army for border manning operations are not directly under its command. This plan is not favourable for developing a professional relationship between the commanders and their juniors.

The Western and Other Borders: In the west, the intact border with Pakistan is managed by the BSF except the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The LoC is the duty of the army with some BSF battalions placed under its operational control. Since the LoC has been mostly active on a daily basis, particularly since the early 1990s, this is considered as proper arrangement. On the LoC, the prime operational responsibility is to safeguard its physical integrity against violation by the Pakistan Army. The army's secondary responsibility is to lessen trans-LoC penetration by armed mercenary terrorists usually aided and abetted by the Pakistan Army and the ISI.

Since last fifty years, the Kashmir conflict is there, the two armies were betrothed in a confrontation with loss of deputed army men and property. An informal cease-fire has been in place all along the LoC, including at the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) along the Salto Range west of the Siachen Glacier, since November 25, 2003. Though the LoC is no longer 'live' as small arms fire, machine gun and mortar fire have almost totally stopped, penetration from POK remains at reduced rates. The border with Nepal was almost not attended till very recently as Nepalese peoples have free access to live and work in India under a 1950 treaty between the two countries. Since the outbreak of a Maoist rebellion in Nepal efforts have been made to progressively step up vigilance along this border as India fears the southward spread of Maoist ideology. The responsibility for this has been entrusted to the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), erstwhile Special Security Bureau.

Management of Indo-Pakistan border:

India has command land of 3,323 Km (including Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir sector) with Pakistan. This border is attached with the States of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir. Border Security Force (BSF) is the Border Guarding Force at Indo-Pakistan Border. Major Initiatives for effective Border Management:

1. Fencing: In order to stop illegal immigration and other anti-national activities from across the border, Government of India has sanctioned erection of fencing along Indo-Pakistan border.

2. Floodlighting: Government of India has also taken up floodlighting works along the Indo-Pakistan border for close vigil, particularly in the night hours

Management of Indo-Bangladesh border:

India has common land of 4096.7 Km with Bangladesh. The entire stretch include plain, riverine, hilly/jungle and with hardly any natural problems. The area is densely populated, and the cultivation is carried out till the last inch of the border at many stretches. Border Security Force (BSF) is the Border Guarding Force at Indo-Bangladesh Border. India's border with Bangladesh has a strange problem of 'Enclaves and Adverse Possessions'. "There are 111 Indian enclaves within Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in India." Thirty-four tracts of Indian land are under the adverse possession of Bangladesh and 40 pieces of Bangladeshi land are in India's adverse possession. Though the Land Border Agreement of 1974 has provisions for the settlement of the issue of adverse possession, it has not been applied so far as the problem is administratively sensitive. The border guarding forces are left to deal with the day-to-day problems that are bound to be thrown up by such territorial complexities. It is necessary that political leadership must invest time and effort to resolve this sensitive issue, unseemly clashes that do no credit to either side will continue to occur and pamper relations between the two nations. Major security issue with Bangladesh is migration. Border management problems such as smuggling, illegal migration, insurgency, trafficking of women child and the construction, repair and maintenance of boundary related structures are addressed through border coordination conference between the border security force and Bangladesh rifle (Mahendra Gaur, 2005).

Major steps taken by government for Effective Border Management:

1. Fencing and Roads: To avert illegal immigration and other anti-national actions from across the border, Government of India has sanctioned erection of fencing/roads in two phases, along IndoBangladesh border.

Management of Indo-Nepal border:

The vigorous nature of the problems about borders management is brought out by the manner in which the sensitivity of India-Nepal border has changed over a period of time. This border, which has been an open one, was once nonviolent and trouble-free. Nonetheless, with the increasing activities of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Nepal, the nature of the border has changed absolutely.

In order to check anti-national activities on the India-Nepal border which is the open and absorbent border and to improve the security along this border, 25 battalions of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) have been deployed as the Border Guarding Force (BGF) on this border. All the 450 Border Out Posts (BOPs) have been established on Indo-Nepal border. Bilateral mechanisms in the form of Home Secretary-level talks and Joint Working Group at the level of Joint Secretaries exist between the two countries. Additionally, there is a mechanism of Border District Coordination Committee Meetings between the district officials of the two nations. These mechanisms serve as

platforms for discussing issues of mutual concern like containing cross-border crimes, smuggling, and situation arising out of terrorist activities, at national and regional/local levels correspondingly.

Management of Indo-Bhutan border:

India shares a 699 Km long border with Bhutan along Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Deployment of border guarding force: To increase the security environment along this border, 12 battalion of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) have been deployed as the Border Guarding Force on this border.

Indo-Bhutan group on border management and security: A Two-sided mechanism in the shape of an India-Bhutan Group on Border Management and Security has been regularly meeting. This mechanism is useful in assessing threat perception to the two countries from groups attempting to take advantage of this open border and in discussing ways to improve the security environment in border area.

Management of Indo-Myanmar border:

India shares a 1643 km long border with Myanmar. Myanmar has common land with Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

Deployment of border guarding force: Assam Rifles has been deployed for counter-insurgency and border to guard this border. Currently, all 15 border guarding battalions are deployed along Indo Myanmar border on Company Operating Base (COB) approach, not as per the BOP system. The companies are deployed on all routes of entrance/outlet and are checking infiltration, smuggling of arms, ammunition, drugs, and fake currency notes.

Management of Indo Sri Lanka and Maldives border:

India's engagement with Sri Lanka and Maldives has need for cooperation to address traditional strategic and non-traditional aspects of security in the Indian Ocean Region. The formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the 1980s had given drive and direction to regional and sub-regional cooperation despite its failure to accomplish expected objectives of regional economic and security integration in South Asia. The implementation of trilateral cooperation is influenced by overall consensus on the need for cooperation and also on the domestic political, economic and security situation within these countries. Even though Sri Lanka and Maldives have identified the convergence of interests in maritime security, competition is bound to exist. Successful implementation of the maritime security agreement will depend upon internal political and economic situation to a great extent. The fishermen issue between India and Sri Lanka is a sensitive issue involving minority communities on both sides.

Border area development programme:

The Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs has been executing a Border Area Development Programme (BADP) through the State Governments as a part of a comprehensive approach to Border Management with the aim to fulfil the special developmental needs of the people living in isolated and unreachable areas situated near the international border and to saturate the border areas with the entire essential infrastructure through convergence of Central/State/BADP/Local schemes and participatory approach and to develop security and wellbeing among the border populace.

Issues for better Border Management:

One of the important problem in managing the borders is their limitation and demarcation on the ground. India has an undemarcated border with China, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The problem of the undemarcated border is more severe with respect to Pakistan and China (Indian Defence Review, 2010). In other words, the boundaries are a mix of well recognized demarcations; International Border, LOC, LAC, Working Boundary, AGPL, McMohan Line, Disputed border. Another issue for border management is Density of population in the border areas. In some places, there is approximately 700-800 persons per sq km on the Indian side and about 1000 persons on the Pakistan side. Such an overpopulated area with a porous border poses problems in detection and apprehension of offenders who have the option of crossing over to the other side to avoid arrest. Since many villages are located so near the border there are approximately 187 villages in Kashmir where houses are located within 150 yards of International Border where the density of the population is far more than the rest of the country (Jamwal, 2002). Border Fencing raise another concern for border management. The prime aim of fencing along the Indo- Pakistan border was to check the access of criminals, stop smuggling and give security to the border population. There are wide gaps as fencing is not complete. This is due to slow progress in acquisition of land, resistance by locals, flaws in considering the project and lack of sincerity. The fencing however, has not resulted in controlling the threat to significant degree. By itself, the fencing is not a barricade. It can be operative only when it is robustly watched and kept under surveillance round the clock. The terrain, climatic conditions, dense vegetation, improper design and alignment without taking into consideration the traditions and culture of the border population, has further led to its repeated breaching. The BSF, deployed to guard the border, is stretched too thin along the border, resulting in large unmanned, unguarded gaps, which are exploited by the offenders. High snowfalls results in large stretches being waterlogged, dense vegetation and undergrowth immediately after the winters. This has severely affected the fencing which got rusted and damaged within a few years of its commissioning. Furthermore, there are many villages between fencing and the International Boundary, where people are in conspiracy with the criminals, making detection of illegal migrants and criminal difficulties. Trouble in Identifying Foreign National is another border management issue. It is well established that Indians of the bordering States and neighbouring countries have resemblance in many ways. They look alike, speak the same language, wear the same dresses and have similar set of culture and traditions, thus it is difficult to identify a foreign national in the absence of identify cards in the border areas. Connivance of the locals with intruders for a payment makes the task of detection more difficult. Similarly at Indo - Nepal border not only the Indian and Nepalese nationals cross the porous border without any restriction, but these days some Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and even Afghan and Iranian nationals penetrate into Indian territory, misusing the open border

to some extent. Their similar face, attire, posture and behaviour resemble the Nepalese and Indian nationals.

Every inhabitant in India has been guaranteed the freedoms mentioned in the Preamble of our Constitution, they have to be consistent with the unity and integrity of India. Though there are numerous challenges for border management, central government is doing at its best to guard inhabitants of India. Preferably, border management should be the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs during cease-fire. However, the active nature of the LoC and the need to maintain troops close to the LAC in a state of readiness for operations in high altitude areas, have forced the army to permanently deploy large forces for this task. While the BSF should be responsible for all settled borders, the responsibility for unsettled and disputed borders, such as the Line of Control (LoC) in J&K and the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the Indo-Tibetan border, should be that of the Indian Army. The principle of 'single point control' must be followed if the borders are to be successfully managed. Despite sharing the responsibility with several para-military and police forces, the army's commitment for border management amounts to six divisions along the LAC, the LoC and the AGPL (Actual Ground Position Line along the Salto Ridge west of Siachen Glacier) in J&K and five divisions along the LAC and the Myanmar border in the eastern sector. It has been emphasized by security specialists that there should be appropriate border guidelines framed for the border guarding forces of all the nations. The aim of these border guidelines was to ensure co-operation between both the border guarding forces over cross border crimes and exchange of information and intelligence at appropriate levels. These guidelines offer that neither side to have any permanent or temporary border security forces within 150 yards on either side of International Border, and no defensive works of any nature including trenches in the stretch of 150 yards on each side of the boundary. Under this provision, Pakistan objects to the construction of fences within 150 yards from the International Border on the pretext that fencing violates the guidelines (Anand Kumar, 2010). It even objects to construction of roads within this distance on the same pretext. This is a massive commitment that is expensive in terms of manpower as well as funds, as the deployment areas are mostly in high altitude territory, and needs to be reduced slowly. The real payoff of a reconciliation with the Chinese would be the possibility of reducing the army's deployment on the LAC. To some extent, the developments in surveillance technology, particularly satellite and aerial imagery, can support to maintain a continuous vigil along the LAC and make it possible to reduce physical deployment as and when modern surveillance assets can be provided on a regular basis to the formations deployed forward. Also, the availability of a large number of helicopter units will improve the quality of mid-air surveillance and the ability to move troops to quickly occupy defensive positions when it becomes necessary. However, these are both pricey ventures and need to be observed in the overall context of the availability of funds for renewal. India's border security problems are many such as the penetration of armed mercenary terrorists from Pakistan, mass migrations from Bangladesh into lower Assam, the smuggling of consumer goods and fake Indian currency from Nepal, the operations of ULFA militants from safe hideouts in Bhutan and the sanctuaries available to the rebellious groups of the north-eastern states in Myanmar and Bangladesh. The nomination of the CRPF as the national level counter-insurgency force should enable the other CPMFs like BSF and ITBP to return to their prime role of better border management.

To summarize, the management of India's international border along its North Eastern States has remained a critical and complex issue. In period of growing interdependence, threats from

eccentric sources pose challenge to the country's security. Due to the tendency of India's neighbours to exploit the country's nation-building problems, India's internal security challenges are indistinguishably related with border management. Indian rebellious groups have for long been provided shelter across the nation's borders by hostile neighbours.