BORDER SECURITY

Dr. Shahid A. HASHMAT
National Defence University, Pakistan

Introduction

The 'Border Security and Control' is an important function of 'State Sovereignty'. "Sovereignty of state is one of the key feature of the Westphalian order."[1] It is also accepted as the supreme legitimate authority within the territorial boundaries of the state.[2] State sovereignty has two dimensions; political independence and equality on one hand and domestic and international on the other. Border security ensures that no person(s) or goods are allowed to enter into territorial borders, including its territorial waters without the official permission of the respective state(s). In order to ensure this states follow their domestic laws, while remaining within the limits of international law and respecting their international obligations. Over a period of time, many bilateral, multi-lateral agreements and international regimes conventions have been developed to exercise effective control and to regulate movement of individuals and goods and services.

1. State Sovereignty and Border Security

The international dimension of the 'Sovereignty' deals with the concept of legal equality of the state and its responsibility towards fulfilling her international commitments and obligations. The domestic aspect of 'Sovereignty' grant a state the authority of make domestic laws in order to ensure independence of the state and to provide protection to its citizens from internal disturbances and external aggression. An effective border control is an essential tool available to any state to ensure safety and security of its people and territory.

---

1   Dr. Shahid A. Hashmat, Contemporary International Conflict Resolution: Role of the UN and the OIC, NUST Publishing, Islamabad, 2015, p.21.

2   Mark R. Amstutz, International Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to World Politics, McGraw-Hill College, Boston, 1999, p.53.

2. Linkage between Global Security and National Border Security

The study of issues pertaining to national security and its connection with global / international security has always been of great interest to scholars of international relations. In fact, during the post-World War II, international relations have been dominated by strategic studies and international security studies. Moreover, "the process commonly referred as globalization has led to internal political issues increasingly externalized and external political issues becoming increasingly internalized."[3] Traditionally, military threat to a state was of main concern as regards national security but gradually many forms of threat such as economic threat, illegal immigration, human, drug and weapon trafficking, environmental degradation, and global warming have also emerged as verity of threats to national security. On top of that, during last two/three decades, terrorism has emerged as a major threat to national security. Thus, the demand for greater control over national borders. The second half of Twentieth century had witnessed emergence of many regional economic and political cooperation blocks, such as EU, NAFTA, ECOWAS, and ASEAN etc., which liberalized the movement of people, goods, services and financial transactions across the world. However, later developments pertaining to numerous terrorist attacks in various parts of the world have forced all such provisions to be placed under strict scrutiny. Therefore, Global security stands linked with national security, which in many ways depended on effective border security. As most of the terrorists are operating beyond their national borders and proxy wars by big powers encourage their transnational activities, it is imperative to adopt regional and global approach towards ensuring border security and thus contributing to global peace and security.

3. Importance of Effective Border Security and Border Control

As mentioned above, Border Security and Control' is an essential function of a state. As any state is obliged to protect her borders (territory) against external enemy, it is equally responsible to ensure that the security at her borders is not compromised / breached to allow illegal immigration, human/drug/weapons trafficking, cross border terrorism, smuggling etc. Such measure are important both from international and national perspectives. Purely from national perspective, border control is extremely important to keep a country safe from numerous crimes and internal security threat. In the contemporary context, the border control assumes greater importance as for as national strategies against regional / global terrorism and extremists are concerned. In some regions of the world, such as Middle East, North Africa and Europe, the issue of large scale influx of refugees, in view of constantly deteriorating humanitar-

---

3   Peter Hough, Understanding Global Security, Routledge, London, 2004, p.2.

ian conditions in different global conflict zones, is posing serious challenges for an effective border control vis a vis humanitarian considerations. Therefore, it is important to consider border control and as essential component of border security.

4. Functions and Responsibilities of Border Security and Control

• Ensure effective counter measures against any external aggression: Traditionally, the security of a state means guarding against any external military threat. Such tasks are performed by the Border Security / Homeland Security Forces during peacetime and by the national defence forces during the war or undeclared hostilities.

• Regulate entry and exit (immigration) in accordance with nation and international laws are managed by national immigration official. They are responsible to promote lawful entry and exit and prevent illegal immigration and human trafficking.

• Regulating the inflow and out flow (import and export) of goods/products, in accordance with national laws and regulation and international treaties is the responsibility of custom official. They are also mandated to prevent entry/exist of contraband good/product/item, such as drugs, narcotics and weapons etc.

• Protection of air space, land borders and coasts / coastal areas is accrued out by dedicated agencies and forces.

• In the recent times, cyber security has also attained paramount importance. Though, many developing countries are still struggling as to how this aspect of national security needs to be handled, developed counties have organized special arrangements and mechanisms to handle such threats, albeit numerous difficulties being faced in this field.

5. Methods and Techniques of Border Security and Control

• Effective border / homeland security systems and forces.

• Effective air space safety, security and control system.

• Effective, sea ports and coastal defence and security arrangements.

• Establishment of official / authorized immigration (entry/exist control) offices/posts/entry & exit points at land borders, air ports and sea ports.

• Implementation of visa regimes.

• Employment of border guards, border security forces, border patrols, coastal guards, custom officials etc.

• Use of physical barriers, such as fence, wall and mines (in some cases). I wish to discuss the last aspect in some details. Can walls and fences be effective? The answer is both yes and no. Walls and fences have been built in many parts of the world. Some glaring example are; US - Mexico border, India-Pakistan border, Israel – Palestine border, South – North Korea border, and Tunis-Mali/Sub Sahara border etc. More recently, Pakistan has tried to do selective fencing on Pakistan – Afghanistan in order to regulate cross border movement across the border, where according to some estimates around 50,000 Afghanis cross the border every day. Iran has dug a trench on some portion of Iran - Pakistan and Iran Afghanistan border and many countries in Europe have started fencing their border to stop, reduce and control the movement / influx of refugees from one country to the other. How effective are all such measures is entirely a different discussion. The experience shows that all such barriers can be breached by determined crosser, unless these are continuously monitored through physical and electronic surveillance, which is very costly affairs. Such arrangements may only be possible in a limited area, that too during active conflicts.

6. Contemporary Challenges for Border Security and Control

• Threat of direct aggression by enemy forces and proxy threat through non-state actors.

• Phenomenal increase in movement of human beings and transportation of goods /products due to increased global production, globalization and IT revolution.

• Alarming increased activities of illegal human traffickers, smugglers and organized crimes.

• Ever escalating regional disputes and conflicts causing unprecedented displacement of human population.

• Forced migrations due to international military intervention/adventurism resulting into enormous damages to resources and loss of human lives, making many areas uninhabitable. The recent example is Syria. In recent past, we all have witnessed similar devastation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

• Alarming growth of global terrorism and unprecedented global reach of terrorists' activities of devastation causing mental paralysis and chaos in affected countries.

• Erosion of effective border control in many conflict zone, e.g. Pakistan – Afghanistan, Iraq – Syria, Syria – Turkey, Syria – Jordan, Libya – Mali and Saudi Arabia – Yemen etc.

• Seamless cross border influence and activities of different terrorist groups making many interstate borders totally ineffective, especially in Middle East and Africa.

• Influx of unprecedented number of refugees in Europe, across Mediterranean, causing serious problem for border control and regulated immigration.

• Financial and administrative challenge for UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international and national humanitarian assistance organizations to handle such colossal human catastrophe and crises. Over the last three / four decades, Pakistan – Afghan border has seen uncontrolled/ unchecked cross border movement of many million Afghan refugees, due to extremely porous nature of border and close proximity of large number of Pashtun villages on both side of border and of inability of the border security control to regulate such movement. The initial influx was due to Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 / 1980, which continues till 1989/1990. Later on, it continued due to internal civil war in Afghanistan. After US invasion in 2001, Pakistan witnessed a new wave of refugees in a very large number that continues till today due to ongoing insecurity and chaos in Afghanistan Of very late some efforts are being made to regulate the unchecked flow of Afghan into Pakistan by establishing border control check post. A proposal for establishing inland border control authority is also being evaluated. Probably, Iran had managed the follow of Afghan refugees in far better way than Pakistan.

– After US invasion of Iraq and dismantling the state structure and national security institution, Iraq has witnessed a great vacuum of governance, which paved the way for growth of innumerable resistance groups, or so called terrorists, which are supported by many international and regional player for control of Iraqi territory and, of course, the natural resources, the petrol & gas. This proxy war in Iraq has destroyed the complete fabric of society and state. Iraqi border are almost without any effective control. Therefore, different factions are at liberty to move around, along with their tanks, military vehicles, missiles, weapons as they feel like. This has a serious implications for the regional peace and security.

– There is a similar situation in Libya and Mali. After American and European misadventure in Libya, the whole region of North Africa is destabilized. Virtually there is no border control / border security at all.

– The situation in Syria is more precarious. The proxy war being pursued by US/NATO and Russian Federation as major adversaries, with the collaboration of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and few other smaller countries as regional players has created very serious threat not only to region but to the whole

world. Terrorists and warring groups move across Syria and Iraq as freely as they wish. There is hardly any border control, except the control exercised by different militias. The ongoing conflict has caused human loos of many hundred thousand innocent civilians and has forced many million to leave their country to take refuge in Turkey, Jordan and in Europe. Many hundred have died in their attempt to reach Europe through illegal travel in Mediterranean and hundreds of thousand still risk the same.

– There are number of North Africans from Mali, Libya and some other countries who are trying to flee to Europe in hope security and better livelihood. This wave of illegal immigration has caused many challenging difficulties and problems for many European countries.

7. Remedial Measures / How to Ensure Effective Border security and Control

• Effective force structure and security systems to monitor land, air space and seaports /coasts of the country, including deployment of appropriate technologies to boost up border security.

• Development of policies, beyond narrow national interest, in favor of human coexistence and geopolitical and geo-economics advantages alone.

• Fair, just and early resolution of global dispute.

• Enhanced international cooperation to strengthen border control and implementation of international obligations, including strengthening of immigration and customs control.

• Exchange / sharing of information, expertise and building the capacities of economically week states.

• Strict implementation of international laws, treaties and conventions regarding prohibition of human trafficking and smuggling of contraband goods and weapons.

• Strict adherence of 'non-interference' in internal affairs of other states, especially though proxy or direct military intervention, either on the name of democracy, regime change and so called human intervention.

8. Advantages / Benefits of Effective Border Security and Control

• National security and national sovereignty.

• Economic prosperity and social harmony.

• Political stability.