

Border Management, Initiatives, Challenges, Importance, Measures

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Border management is a **multifaceted** term that includes, the regulation of legal and illegal **immigration**, ensuring **secured cross-border trade**, and **prevention of cross-border crimes** such as smuggling, human trafficking, and infiltration. India's borders face many of these **security challenges** due to unsettled borders, expansionist policies of neighbours, difficult terrain, harsh weather, and lack of infrastructural development.

For effective border management, several initiatives have been undertaken by the **Border Management Division** of the **Ministry of Home Affairs** including the construction of fences, floodlighting, roads, Border outposts, deployment of technological solutions and measures for border area development.

Need for Border Management

India has a huge **15,106.7 km** of land border and a coastline of **7,516.6 km** including island territories. India shares land borders with Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar whereas, it shares maritime borders with Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia.

Poor border management inevitably leads to a **volatile internal security** situation. The following are major reasons why effective border management is needed in India.

- **Difficult and diverse terrain:** Indian borders span across diverse terrains namely hot and cold deserts, fertile lands, swampy marshes, changing river courses, open beaches, estuaries, snow-covered peaks, and tropical evergreen jungles.
- **Open and Porous border:** Indian borders with Nepal and Bhutan are open. The borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar are highly porous due to rugged terrain and dense forests.
 - Open and porous borders pose the challenges of **illegal immigration and infiltration**.
- **Human and drug trafficking:**
 - India is wedged between the world's two largest areas of illicit opium production, the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle.
 - This proximity has been a source of vulnerability since it has made India both a destination and a transit route for opiates produced in these regions.
 - As per **UNODC**, India is a destination as well as a transit country for human trafficking.
 - **Bangladesh** is a major source of humans trafficked into India.
- **Illegal cross-border trade:** Proper border management is needed to curb illegal cross-border trade which poses economic as well as security challenges.
 - For example, the illegal imports of machinery into India between 2015-16 and 2017-18 cost the capital goods industry **Rs 1.53 lakh crore in losses** along with **19 lakh job losses**.
- **Cross-border terrorism:** The terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and PoK and the infiltration attempts from across the border continue to pose a challenge to the Indian security forces.
- **Insurgency:** Insurgents have sanctuaries in neighbouring countries of India, particularly in Myanmar.
 - The cross-border movement of **Naga and Mizo insurgents** for training, purchase of arms, and shelter, makes the border extremely challenging.
- **Border disputes:** The challenge of coping with long-standing territorial and boundary disputes with hostile neighbours has made efficient border management mandatory.
- **Trafficking of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN):** Many experts have termed smuggling of FICN as '**economic terrorism**' by ISI of Pakistan because it is aimed to generate inflation, and deprive the government of its legitimate revenues as well as used for terror financing.
- **Use of technology by perpetrators:** Newer challenges in border management have emerged with new technology.
 - For example, the recent surge in drug trafficking from Pakistan by using drones poses a serious security threat.
 - Drones are also used to deliver arms to terrorists.
- **Need for Maritime Border Security:** It is needed due to serious threats like piracy, terrorism, migrant smuggling, trafficking in people, arms proliferation, etc. originating from the sea.

Agencies Responsible for Border Management

The guarding of the Indian borders is primarily entrusted to central armed police forces (CAPFs) under the principle of '**one border one force**'. They function under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.

- **Security agencies for land border management:**
 - **Assam Rifles:** Its main role is guarding the **India-Myanmar** border.
 - **Border Security Force:** It guards the **India-Pakistan** and **India-Bangladesh** borders.
 - The LoC in J&K is the responsibility of the army with some BSF battalions placed under its operational control.
 - **Indo-Tibetan Border Police:** It guards the **India-China** border.
 - Besides, the Indian army guards the LAC along with ITBP.
 - **Seema Suraksha Bal:** The **Nepal and Bhutan** borders have been entrusted to the SSB.
- **Border Road Organisation:** It was formed in 1960 under the Ministry of Defence.
 - Its main role is to develop and maintain road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries such as Bhutan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, etc.
 - Key projects under the BRO are **Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie Road (DS-DBO)**, **Atal Tunnel**, **Sela Tunnel**, **Balipara-Chariduar-Tawang** Road, etc.
- **Maritime border security management:** The coastal security of India has a three-tiered structure.
 - **Indian Navy** is responsible for the overall maritime security that includes coastal and offshore security.
 - **Indian Coast Guard** is additionally responsible for the security of India's territorial waters (up to 12 nautical miles) including areas to be patrolled by the coastal police.
 - Coastal patrolling close to shallow waters is done by State Marine Police.
 - Further, the **Border Security Force** is deployed in the creek areas of Gujarat and Sundarbans in West Bengal.

Initiatives Taken for Border Management

India's border management strategy has four main elements which are border guarding, border regulation, development of border areas, and bilateral institutional mechanisms.

- **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS):** It is the integration of manpower, sensors, networks, intelligence, and command control solutions to improve situational awareness to facilitate quick response.
 - It is implemented along parts of the India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh Border.
- **Integrated check posts (ICPs):** An ICP houses all related regulatory agencies, such as border guarding forces, customs, and immigration, as well as support services such as state-of-the-art scanning and detection devices, foreign exchange bureau, banking, parking, passenger facilitation area and a cargo area.
- **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):** This aims to meet the special development needs of the people living near the International Boundary through the convergence of BADS/ Central/ State/ UT/ Local schemes.
 - It aims to focus on six thematic areas- Basic infrastructure, Health infrastructure, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development.
 - **Village Defence Committees:** Locals can be trained and incentivized to form VDCs to report illegal activities and infiltration.

- **Vibrant Villages Programme:** This is part of the border area development strategy where over 100 villages will be developed along the LAC.
- **Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) Scheme:** The scheme is aimed at infrastructure development and technological solutions at India's international borders.
 - The scheme involves Border Fences, Border Roads, Border Floodlights, Border Out Posts (BOPs), Helipads and foot-tracks along the international borders of the country.
- **Bharatmala Pariyojana: The focus is on the construction of border roads along international boundaries.**
 - The project also includes the construction of international connectivity roads to promote trade with countries like **Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal.**
- **Constitution of Bilateral Institutional Mechanism:** These include National and Sectoral level Meetings, and the Joint Working Group on Border Management, where issues like arms and drugs smuggling, illegal migration, infiltration, border trade etc. are discussed.
- **Hi-tech surveillance:** This includes the installation of sensor-based monitoring systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to strengthen border security and surveillance.
 - Example: The Indian Army uses a variety of drones such as **Nishant, Ghatak, Rustom**, etc.
- **End of Free Movement Regime at India-Myanmar border:** which is the integration of manpower, sensors, networks, intelligence, and command control solutions.
 - While the FMR facilitated the tribes to maintain cross-border links, it also allowed insurgents and traffickers to enter/exit freely.
- **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act of 2023:** This allows for forest land diversion for security-related projects located within **100 km** of India's international borders without requiring forest clearance.
- **Initiatives Taken for Maritime Border Management:**
- **Overall coordination:** The ICG was made responsible for overall coordination between the state and the central agencies.
 - **Coastal Security Scheme (CSS):** Aimed to strengthen the security infrastructure and capabilities of the police of coastal states. For instance, the National Automatic Identification System, Biometric ID cards for coastal fishermen, Vessel tracking management systems, etc. are part of CSS.
 - **National Committee for Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security:** Coastal security is also reviewed periodically with all stakeholders by the NCSMCS, constituted under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary.
 - **India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region):** With vision SAGAR and the **Maritime Security Strategy** India aims to build its role as the 'Preferred Security Partner' in our extended maritime neighbourhood.
 - **Sagarmala Pariyojana:** More than 400 projects have been identified for port modernisation and new port development, port connectivity enhancement, port-linked industrialisation and coastal community development.

Challenges in Border Management

The persistence of security threats indicates that several inadequacies exist in the system that require urgent remedy. Some of these shortcomings are discussed below.

- **Shortage of Infrastructure:** As per government data, there is a substantive lack of border infrastructure in India.
 - China can mobilise large forces by train and by road in a short span of time whereas; on the Indian side, troop mobility and logistics supply in the forward areas are constrained as some existing roads simply end **60 to 80 km** from the LAC.
 - The government has sped up infrastructure projects in recent years.
 - For example, the three projects in Arunachal Pradesh are in the developmental phase - the **Trans-Arunachal Frontier Highway**, the East-West Industrial Corridor Highway, and the Trans-Arunachal Highway.
- **Shortage of Manpower:** As per the government as of January 1, 2023, a total of 83,127 posts were vacant in the CAPFs and the Assam Rifles against the total sanctioned strength of 1,015,237.
- **Delays in Project Implementation:**
 - As per the **CAG report in 2017**, a total of 73 strategically important roads have been identified by the Government as Indo-China Border Roads (ICBRs). Out of these 73 **ICBRs**, the execution of 61 roads was entrusted to the BRO with their targeted completion by 2012. But, only 22 such ICBRs were completed by 2016.
- **Difficulties in Coordination:** The involvement of several military and paramilitary forces, each with its own ethos poses problems of command and control, the lack of accountability, poor intelligence etc.
 - For example, the LAC with China is manned by Vikas battalions, ITBP, and the Indian Army whereas; on the Chinese side the entire LAC is managed by a single commander.
- **Challenges concerning maritime border management: Several challenges plague maritime security architecture such as:**
 - lack of coordination among ICG, Navy and coastal police,
 - Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing,
 - maritime terrorism,
 - smuggling of goods, illicit arms, and human trafficking,
 - the reluctance of some littoral states to cooperate and poor maritime domain awareness.

Suggested Measures in Border Management

The continuation of several border issues gives us compelling evidence to take further steps to strengthen border management. The following are major suggestions to improve security further:

- **Better coordination among various agencies:** The various agencies involved in border management, such as customs, immigration, armed forces, border security, and intelligence agencies, need to cooperate to develop a common strategy.
- **Innovation and technology infrastructure:** The technology-enabled smart border management includes the following technology infrastructure for Indian borders:
 - **Smart identity management** using biometrics
 - **Smart inspection systems** using Non-invasive inspection techniques such as explosive vapour detectors, full-body scanners, and metal detectors can be used for the detection of concealed weapons, drugs, illicit radiological material, etc.

- **Monitoring and surveillance systems by drones**, for example - VTOL and UAVs.
- **Capacity building:** The training of the border guarding forces should be customised to acquire greater technological skills and to sensitise them about the local culture. This will facilitate meaningful dialogue with the local people and help garner local support.
- **Community participation:** The government should undertake sustained community interaction programmes to sensitise the border residents and encourage them to work as '**ears and eyes**' for the security agencies.
 - The training of the border guarding forces should be customised to acquire greater technological skills and to sensitise them about the local culture.
- **Increased cooperation with Neighbours:** For instance, military operations by **Myanmar** and **Bhutan** were taken to crack down on Indian insurgent groups. India should further deepen such cooperation by assisting its neighbours.

Border Management UPSC PYQs

Question 1. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) by our adversaries across borders to ferry arms/ammunition, drugs, etc, is a serious threat to internal security. Comment on the measures being taken to tackle this threat. **(UPSC Mains 2023)**

Question 2. For effective border area management, discuss the steps required to be taken to deny local support to militants and also suggest ways to manage favourable perceptions among locals. **(UPSC Mains 2020)**

Question 3. Analyse internal security threats and transborder crimes along Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders including the Line of Control (LoC). Also, discuss the role played by various security forces in this regard. **(UPSC Mains 2020)**

Question 4. The cross-border movement of insurgents is only one of the several security challenges facing the policing of the border in North-East India. Examine the various challenges currently emanating across the India-Myanmar border. Also, discuss the steps to counter the challenges. **(UPSC Mains 2019)**

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