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BORDER FROM HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE: A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Indrakshi Phukan

Abstract

In simple sense, borders are the lines that separate two different entities whether it is country, state, province, city or town. For a nation-state borders are the symbol of state sovereignty. But most often, the people residing along the borders are not considered as a citizen of a particular nation-state. Even they are deprived of the basic facilities which are being enjoyed by the mainstream people. A nation-state views border through the lens of national security putting less importance on borderland people. The notable thing is that the borderland people perceive the concept of security which is not similar with the kind of security the nation-state perceives. Their lives are not only associated with the issues of national security, but also with the issues of human security. In this context this article makes an attempt to provide a conceptual analysis of border from human security perspective.

Key Words: border, borderland, borderland people, national security, human security.

Introduction

The territory of every modern nation-state is demarcated by a border. In that sense, border signifies an area of geographical boundary separating sovereign states, federal states as well as internal administrative units. Since the emergence of modern state system, mapping of borders became an important business of the states (Michel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, 1997) through which states established a world-wide system of clear-cut territorial jurisdiction to have their legal and political sovereignty. The literature on border has reflected that the term border, which is considered as the symbol of state sovereignty, can be viewed from different perspectives. If some scholars have defined border as political construction, some others

have defined border from economic, cultural even psychological perspective too.

A nation-state however, views borders always from national security perspective. For nation-state border always represent the symbol of state sovereignty. Borders are, in fact, the defining limits of nation-states (Sikder and Sarkar, 2005).

Border, Borderland as concepts

The term border does not have any specific definition which can be unanimously accepted because the term border has been defined by different people from their own disciplinary perspectives. Therefore, it is difficult to have a precise definition of the term border. Initially, it was Friedrich Ratzel, a German Geographer and Ethnographer first coined the term “Living Space” by the name “Lebensraum” and through his work he made a foundation for German Variant of Geo-Politics. His argument was that like human body states are also organic and subjected to growth and development and borders are the expression of the power of that organic state. Borders are too subjected to change (P. Laine, 2015). Following his organic state theory Karl Haushofer also made an attempt to conceptualize the term border and considered border as delimiters of territorial control and ideology (Hans W, Weigert, 1942). Later on scholars from different disciplines have provided their own definition regarding border and thus contributed towards the conceptual growth and development of the concept. Notable thing is that though people belonging to different disciplines have made remarkable contribution towards the conceptual understanding of border, but David Newman, Brunet-Jailley, Malcolm Anderson, Donnan and Wilson, Michiel Baud and William Van Schendel etc. are the most celebrated authors of border studies who have made valuable contribution towards the conceptual understanding of the concept. Border, however, became an important matter of discussion especially for the geographers since the end of 19th century. Along with that the changes that took place in international relations including the end of cold war also contributed towards the growing importance of borders and border studies among scholars/academicians belonging to different disciplines. It is noteworthy that the initial works on borders primarily discussed borders from the Geo-Political point of view but gradually scholars started viewing borders from different perspective and as a result it has gained an interdisciplinary character (Jussi Laine, 2015). There have been however, some remarkable definitions of borders that have been put forward

by different scholars working on borders at different period of time. In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight two such definitions of border. A remarkable definition of border has been put forward by J. Agnew according to whom border is a line on maps or barriers on the ground, whose existence are confirmed on many grounds: political, economic and social (J. Agnew, 2008). Another remarkable definition was put forward by Gabriel Popescu who stated that borders are the lines represented on the maps that separates earth's surface. According to him borders carry with them a sense of division or separation in space and at the same time borders have the power to inculcate a sense of commonness among some people and also people's perception on neighbors (Popescu, 2012). In contemporary period, however, the most widely accepted definition of the term border is the line that divides two territorial entities. (Newman, 2003) It needs to be mentioned here that most often, the terms border, borderland have been used interchangeably though convey conceptual differences. Borderlands are the adjacent regions of the borders. Borderlands are geographical places demarcated and defined by state designed boundaries (Chan and Womack, 2016). A Borderland is usually understood as the region in one nation that is significantly affected by an international border.

On the other hand, borderland people or border communities are those which are lying on the margins of more than one state and those which are physically closer to a foreign regime (Chan and Womack, 2016). Following the definition of Robert MacIver on community where he stated in a community there must be a sense of belonging and of sharing its customs and traditions, it can be said that border communities are also a group of people who follow a way of life or patterns of behavior which mark them out as different from people of another society and from other people in the larger society in which they live in

However, Borders, in the age of globalization have become porous leading to frequent flows of goods and people more often without state control (Levitt, 2004), and thereby posing a threat to the national security and integrity of nations. There are some borders that have been known for tremendous mobility of goods and people across borders more often without state control. The South-Asian borders are in this regard best instances where there have been lots of cases of such informal/illegal activities including smuggling of arms, cosmetics, gold, drug, animals, human trafficking, human right violation etc. at the borders. The borderlands in view of this emergent problems has turned out to be a high security zones with deployment of security forces,

construction of electric fencing, more surveillance both human and technological etc. Within this context, the situational condition of the people residing alongside the border or the borderland communities needs to be addressed because nation-states look at the border primarily through the lens of national security, ignoring the human security dimension of the border. But with the coming up of new emerging challenges in the era of globalization, it has been felt that only national security dimension would not substantiate without the dimension on human security. There has been a world-wide recognition regarding the need of the concept human security in response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats - from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health epidemics, international terrorism, human right violation etc.

Human Security as concept

As a concept human security represents a new approach to security. Traditionally the concept of security was understood narrowly and the meaning was only associated with the state. In relation to this discussion, the views put forward by political realists such as Hans J Morgenthau, John Herz and many others can be mentioned. They argue that in international relation/politics when security is talked of, it represents only state security, i.e., the safeguarding of nations territory, national border and protecting national interest and maintaining domestic political order. And all these together constitute the framework of the concept national security. The concept of national security, however, was contested by the ideas of liberal theorists in the 1970's and gradually there had been a growing realization that military security is not adequate enough to tackle with the non-military threats to national security. (Chari and Gupta, 2009) It was realized at the global level that the world can never be at peace unless people have security in their lives. Finally it was in the year 1994, the United Nations Development (UNDP) came out with the Human Development Report that provided a new understanding of the concept security emphasizing on security of people rather than state, territories or arms. The Human Development Report defined Human Security as *"Legitimate concern of the ordinary people in their daily lives, for whom security symbolizes protection from the threat to disease, hunger, unemployment crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards."* The Human Development Report of UNDP recognizes seven components of human security and these include economic

security, political security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security and community security.

However, what represents a human security policy is mostly unclear. Academicians as well as policymakers have criticized the concept on various grounds. But in spite of having criticism, it has gained much significance in post-cold war period as new sources of threats have emerged for which states around the world started focusing more on individual security than the states. Even human security started occupying an important position in security policy agenda of many countries including Switzerland, European Union, Japan, Canada and the like. who have given priority to different aspects related to human Security. It needs to be mentioned that one of the first countries to adopt the human security approach in their security policy was Canada (Axworthy, 1997). While the UNDP report identified the seven elements of human security associated with underdevelopment, the Canadian approach as well as Norwegian approach talks about human insecurities resulting from violent conflicts. Hence Canada talked in favor of the concept of "the responsibility of intermediate powers" for international peace and security of people and in that context the Canadian approach advocates military intervention in the internal affairs of the state with good intention (Human Security and Global Governance, 2001). In the same way Japan as well as Bhutan too has come out with their own approaches to human security. While Japan's human security approach gives importance on two aspects, freedom from want and freedom from fear, as the prerequisites to have human security, hence Japanese human security policy gives importance on economic development and provision for basic human needs. In the same way, Bhutan's human security approach also gives importance on providing vocational education, literacy and income security, job security for vulnerable people including women and children in Bhutan so that the nation-state can achieve the wellbeing of all section of the society and thereby can achieve national happiness. The notable thing is that their approach to human security is much closer to the idea of human development which is about expanding the richness of human life, creating a condition of fair opportunities and choices for people. As far as the application of the concept of human security in Indian context is concerned, this view has been found that India too shows its concern for the concept of human security. In Indian context, it has been observed that Indian has not sought to make human security a policy goal, instead it has sought to operationalise the concept by adopting a large number of social and economic security measures that attempt to place people at the centre of

concerns. India's approach to the concept human security has sought to find solution to the emerging security challenges that the state has been suffering from. However, for most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life on issues like job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime, etc; these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world (United Nations Development Program, 1994).

Border/Borderland from the human Security perspective:

Before making an attempt to understand border from the perspective of human Security, it is noteworthy that states view border and borderlands through the lens of national security. In other words, borders and borderlands always function as symbol of state securitization (Diener and Hagen, 2012), ignoring its human security aspects. But border is not just the dividing line, it is not only the markers of states, it has meaning beyond that. Border symbolizes different political, social and cultural distinctions and at the same time implies the existence of networks and system of interaction across them (Baud and Schendel, 1997). In the borderland there is the existence of social, economic and cultural affinities which are found in the form of cross-border trade, having a border lingua franca, cross border networks of friendship, courtship, kinship etc. From that point of view, border can be an economic border, border can be a political border and border can also be a cultural border as stated by David Newman while explaining about borders. David Newman stated that it is the border that determines the nature of group belongings, affiliation and membership and also determine the way in which the processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized. Border both works as a barrier and engines of connectivity. People living in the borderlands share cultural similarities with the people living in the other side of the border and it leads to a sense of belongingness to a group of people which is also accompanied by emotional attachment. Such intermingling of border culture is hence called as 'spaces of hybridity,' in which people share a sense of belonging and this is what that distinguishes them from the other parts of the nation-states (Donnam and Wilson, 1999). The notable thing is that the way border gets importance/focus by the government, the people residing along borders are not considered by the state in the similar manner. Most often the borderland people or the border communities are ignored by the nation-states. Though borderlands constitute an important part of a nation-state, but borderland people are not considered as equal in different aspects with the

other parts of the country. They fall in a dilemmatic situation of citizen or non-citizen due to their similarities in language and cultural attachment with the neighboring states. As a result, they always stay away from the mainstream people and experience different challenges. Most of the time, their national identities are considered as vague and undefined. Due to their close proximity/affinities with the neighboring state the borderland people suffer from identity crisis which makes them bound to have blurred identities. It has been stated that the borderland people are most often ignored by the mainstream and even governments pay little attention to them (Papademetriou and Meyers, 2001). It has also been stated that borderlands are considered as marginalized region and hence get less attention as far as national policy is concerned. (Thapa, 2014) Border areas tend to lack effective political and economic control over major decisions which affects their day to day life and it has been commented that such isolation leads to a sense of alienation of those people from the mainstream (Sofield, 2006). Moreover, these people have been deprived of not only the basic necessities but they face some other problems too like trafficking, smuggling etc. as some of the border regions are serving as transit point of a large number of illegal migrants from neighboring countries and a place of some other illegal activities (Srivastava and Pandey, 2018). With regard to illegal migration, it can be said that, illegal migration or undocumented migration poses a great challenge to the political, social, economic and cultural security of a state by changing the social fabric. This view has also been found that the border communities are the most vulnerable local communities which encounter with different kind of problems at the borders. As far as trafficking is concerned, along with trafficking of goods and services, people get trap in the hands of traffickers and it has been found that trafficking in the borderland takes place on the blessings of some governmental officials who keep providing shelter to the traffickers and surprisingly the trafficked persons are not considered as victim by the state authority for which they rarely go to the authorities with their complaints (Fukuda, 2003). Thus their lives and security get threatened.

With regard to the issue of migration either, legal or illegal, there have been stories of harassment, violence and discrimination that migrants face when they cross borders. Different research done on this issue have brought it to the light that people who have migrated from countries like Nepal and Bangladesh to India for different purposes including in search of better work and livelihood opportunities, they too face harassment, violence and discrimination at the borders. In a research carried on the experiences

of Nepali and Bangladesh migrants to India, it has been found that the intensity of violence that the Nepali migrant face at the borders is comparatively less than the Bangladeshi Migrant and it is because of the Friendship Treaty between India and Nepal (Samuels and Wagle 2011). On the other hand, in case of Bangladeshi migrant they need to produce passports and Visas at the time of entering into India and most often some enter without documents especially at night taking the advantage of no border controls but at the borders their lives become prone to violence. It has been found that since 2006 about 347 Bangladeshis have been killed by Indian Forces along the India-Bangladesh border (IRIN (2011).

Again, though for national security purpose state deploys paramilitary forces at the borders but its effects on the border communities are most often ignored or underestimated. Sometimes the presence of heavy paramilitary presence leads to enormous suspicion and human rights violation. The militarized border sometimes becomes a threat for the borderland people as sometimes borderland people are suspected for various illegal activities taken place at the borders because of their trans-border ties. In addition to that, the nexus between criminal and border guarding forces make borderland more vulnerable (Das, 2010). It has been found that borderland people are living in fear of the BSF. Basically their presence makes women lives more vulnerable by indulging in activities like sexual harassment, rape etc. All these clearly reflect the gross violation of human rights at the borders and thus the presence of Human Security at the Borders. In addition to these, some states are silent regarding the prevention of the “global crime”. It has been stated by Sakiko Fukuda in his article that most countries/states do not show its interest in providing assistance towards the fight against the global crime (Fukuda, 2003). The Human Development Report (HDP) 1994 stated that the concept of security has long been interpreted narrowly which emphasized only security of territory from external aggression and protection of national interest. According to the report the concept of security has been related more to a security of nation-states than people (UNDP, (United Nations Development program, 1994). However, in the context of the above discussion, the views put forwarded by Jennifer Leanings regarding human security can be mentioned. According to her, human security not only includes the existence of the basic needs of people but it also includes psychosocial needs such as identity, participation and autonomy and individuals’ relationship with location, community and time which means the right of the people to have relationship with the society and family. Following this definition it can be said that

borderland people lack human security. The Borderlands are not object of concern for the states though human security is considered as a universal principle and an obligation of states to give a similar status as given to the international human rights. But states are either unable or unwilling to do so (Theede, 2008). It has been argued by many that it is the sole responsibility of the state to build the foundation of an effective democratic state that values its own people and protects the rights of the minorities (Kilgour, 2000) and thereby can promote the concept of human security. But most often it has been seen that states try to maintain its national security by violating the security of individuals as said by Ramesh Thakur (Thakur, 2000). As the borderlands are affected by a foreign regime, its impact can also be found in their language. Generally border marks the spatial limits of language. But in case of borderland people what happens is that their close proximity in language with the neighboring state, most often they develop a mixed language, called as “border lingua-franca.” Language barrier, however, is a form of exclusion, that leads to potential discrimination and harassment and their accent and lack of fluency sets them apart from the mainstream and for all these reasons they live in a dilemmatic situation of citizen-non-citizen. As a result, states view them through the lens of suspicion and get deprived of the basic facilities which are meant for the citizens. As far as political rights are concerned, from the view point of state they become doubtful voters. There are instances where it has been found that many such people have been deprived of their political rights. In this context, the denial of political rights by the state of Assam to some people who have been suspected as foreigners for having such blurred identities can be mentioned. A large number of people have been excluded from the recently updated NRC list in Assam for being suspected as foreigners.

However, in relation to the above discussion, it can be said that the existence/presence of human security in different borderlands vary from one to another. In other words, the concept of human security differs contextually. Human security in a political borderland is different from that of an economic borderland or cultural borderland.

Human security in a militarized and securitized border:

As expressed by Martin Deleixhe, Magdalena Dembinska (Deleixhe and Dembinska: 2019) border encircles the territory on which a state claims sovereignty and demarcate its spatial boundaries from the others, this is the political concept of border. The notable thing is that to protect this political

border from external aggression and war and also from other external threats nation-state gives importance on border management. In some cases it has been seen/observed that state deploys paramilitary forces at the borders to keep border safe and also peaceful by combating the illegal activities taken place at the borders. The notable thing is that in such militarized and securitized borders the concept of human security is really a matter of concern / discussion. Borders get securitized or militarized from the perspective of national security. In such militarized or securitized borderland the human security of borderland people get threatened in a multiple ways. These people most often get harassed by the Security forces for various reasons. Some times their freedom of movement also gets curtailed. The securitized border not only bring threats to the borderland communities, but in some cases, such border can be a threat even to the human security of the security personnel deployed at the border if such border situates in a difficult geographical location. Adverse geographical location of border poses threat to very existence of security personnel in number of ways. Moreover, highly militarized border is also associated with human sufferings at the borders. Here, in relation to this discussion, the US-Mexico border can be mentioned. U.S Mexico-border has changed from relatively calm, highly interconnected border cities into a heavily patrolled border with new entry and exit requirements which brings lots of sufferings to the undocumented migrants. (Slack and Martinez, 2016) While discussing about border militarization, Raymond Michalowski held the view that border militarization in countries like U.S brings lots of sufferings to the migrants or those cross U.S-Mexico border violating the Immigration law. Michalowski (2007) has commented that militarization policy of U.S such as “Operation Gatekeeper” unnecessarily brings lots of social injury to the migrants. The policy is such that it makes them bound to away from the safer routes and toward more dangerous routes just to showcase their ‘operational control over the U.S-Mexico border.’

However, Michalowski has also highlighted the deployment of Border Patrol Agents by the U.S Government to take care of the migrants who are in distress as a means of providing humanitarian assistance which is for him quite contradictory. In the same way, South-Asian border like Indo-Bangladesh border though considered as peaceful but this securitized border has also many stories of gross human rights violation.

Cultural borderland and human security

Border can be a cultural borderland too. There are some border scholars who have viewed border from the perspective of culture. Scholars

like Brunet Jailly, Victor Konrad, Heather N. Nicol and David Newman have noted the growing importance of the cultural and humanist perspective in understanding and conceptualizing borders in geopolitically and geographically oriented border studies (Tuulikki, 2014). By the term “culture,” these scholars refers to “a specific culture of the borderland communities,” (Jailly, 2005) “the way of life,” and also as a social construction, i.e., as a “Representation of that life” (Konrad and Nicol, 2011). It needs to be mentioned that the territorially placed border is seen as a zone of cultural, linguistic or physical contact, which enables the diffusion of cultural traits from one cultural area to another by denoting regional and temporal differences between cultures. Kuri Tuulikki while discussing about border cultures mentioned that the borderland represents as less developed form of cultural traits. On the other hand, the mainland or the centre represents as the sources of innovation from which novelty and developments travel towards the margin, but the notable thing is that cultural traits survived in more authentic forms in the margins than in the centers (Konrad and Nicol, 2011). Regarding border culture, however, it has been stated that with the emergence of the new generation of border studies, people started understanding border as “Hybrid spaces,” where several cultural features fuse and form a hybrid culture which cannot be returned to any previously existing forms and thus leads to such borderland as an area of new and emerging cultural forms (Canclini, 1995).

Economic borderland and human security:

Border can also be an economic border. Though border serves as important symbolic function in maintaining stable conception of national identity which constitutes the corner-stone of the nation-state, but at the same time, border facilitates the movement of goods and services and thereby enhances the process of economic development (Makwerere, 2018). Though the globalization theorists hold the view that the process of globalization has led to the gradual decline of border but in reality it serves as important symbolic points of economic connection between trading partners (Herz, 1957). There are various instances throughout the world where it has been found that border region are no longer isolated and unproductive spaces in the age of globalization, rather they are performing vital function. If some are working as cross-border economic zone, some are playing important role in enhancing local economies. In other words, border trade can be an important vehicle for the Socio-economic development of the bordering territories. But notable thing is that in case of some borders, the movement of goods and services and other economic activities take place illegally, in other words informally.

Hence in the eyes of government these have been a source of insecurities to the nation-state but the rural poor people living in the borderlands do not consider it as a source of insecurity, rather for them such economic activities taken place at the border bring lots of livelihood opportunities to them. Hence for them, it is a source of security. In this context, the views put forward by Trevor H.B Sofield, regarding border can be mentioned. In his article he shows the possibility of borders becoming an area of tourism and thereby it can enhance the local economies and according to him, there will be a possibility of facilitating cultural interaction, if governments embrace co-operation along their borders.

Conclusion

When we talk about border, borderland and human security, it needs to be mentioned that borders are always considered as the defining limits of nation-states. But human life exists at the borders. From the above discussion it has become clear that human security of different groups of people get threatened at the border-primarily the borderland communities or the inhabitants of the borderland, the migrant people as well as the refugees and also the security personnel who are bound to live in the midst of adverse geographical location. In Indian context it has been observed that India still views border from national security perspective. But in the context of the changing socio-political and economic scenario, the need of hour is to diversify the concept as well as the operational meaning of the term national security. The contemporary situation is such that now the security of individuals, nation-state and world community has an interdependent nature. Hence attack on any one of this requires collective mechanism to deal with. Gradually it has been observed that there has been paradigm shift in the national security notion of the state though not adequately comprehensive in scope and perspective. However, seeing the contemporary challenges it has been stated that it is the high time for states like India to realize the concept like national unity and territorial integrity not through weapons but through process of economic development amongst the different section of society through equal distribution of benefits of economic development. However, the life narratives of some borderland people bring a different picture of the borderland and their perception on the concept human security. For them security not only means freedom from want but also from any kind of danger that can emerge in the borderland at any point of time. The available literature on borders have revealed the fact that though states like India has emphasized on border

areas development program, construction of roads, rural health infrastructure, construction of border *Haat*, as a part of border management, still government has a long way to go in inculcating a sense of security among the borderland people. It is the urgent need for every government to take the issues related with border with utmost importance and must view border not only from the national security perspective but also from human security perspective which emphasizes individual security more than state security, where states provide more option to people in the areas of education, health, income, job opportunity irrespective of caste, religion, geographical location etc. Moreover, to make the borderland developed, it is important for every state specially for the developing countries to view border not merely as line that demarcates national boundary but to view border as connecting zones for inclusive growth and development then only states like India will be able to inculcate a sense of security among the borderland in habitants and will be able to maintain human security there in the borderland.

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