

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

A seminar on “*Border Management: Guarding the Frontiers*” was conducted on 17 July 2014 by Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS). The seminar was attended by officers from Indian Armed Forces, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), research faculty from think tanks and academicians. Conducted over two sessions, the seminar focused on the existing challenges to border management and a future integrated model for effective management. The panellists for the seminar were:-

- Shri GK Pillai- Former Home Secretary.
- Lt Gen Mukesh Sabharwal, former Adjutant General.
- Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, Former DG MO.
- Maj Gen Umong Sethi, Former MGGS, Northern Command.
- Shri DK Tripathi, DIG (Operations), BSF.
- Brig Narender Kumar, DDG, Army HQ.
- Cdr Raghvendra Mishra, Research Fellow, National Maritime Foundation

India shares 15,106.7 km of its boundary with six nations, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Its coastal boundary of 7,516 km includes 5,422 km of coastline in the mainland and 2,094 km of coastline bordering the islands. The border runs through 92 districts in 17 states and the coastline touches 13 states and union territories. The complexities of guarding our borders are further enhanced due to varying degree of ground realities and a number of agencies guarding the borders.

Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL) in Siachen glacier, Line of Control (LC) in J&K, International Boundary (IB) with Pakistan from J&K to Gujarat, Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China are the varying nomenclatures based on the ground situation as well as different claim lines. There are various forces looking after the border that include the Indian Army, Assam Rifles, Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). The Indian Navy and the Coast Guard looks after the maritime frontiers. The dynamics of the border and the forces deployed keeps changing with the place and with time. Each border has its own nuances based on perceived threat, terrain and local population. The approach to border management must vary from one border to other.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Border Management Policy**

India needs to formulate and promulgate its policy on border management. The policy must enunciate clear cut response mechanisms and issues of command and control. The border management policy must take into account the peculiarities of each border and evolve a comprehensive strategy to amalgamate all available resources for effective border management.

The management of disputed and unresolved border must be the responsibility of Indian Army functioning under the MoD. The management of other borders must be with the CAPFs, functioning under MHA. All organisations involved in border management must seek directions from and be accountable to one nodal agency during peace and war. In event of more than one force on a particular border, the chain of command must be clearly laid down.

### **Nodal Ministry**

The nodal ministry for management of unresolved and disputed should be MoD. The MHA should be the nodal ministry for all borders other than unresolved and disputed borders.

Presently, the resolution of border disputes is the responsibility of MEA. Low staffing levels and limited leverage of MEA with state governments, restricts its ability to effectively resolve border disputes. The responsibility for border resolution must hence be re-allocated to MoD for unresolved borders and to the MHA for other borders. MEA functionaries can however be part of border resolution committees.

Each ministry must have a dedicated section working on resolution of border disputes. It can be composed of experts from various fields. There must be continuity in the dialogue process with one thought process. It can be the nodal agency for issuing guidelines, directions and illustrations to all the stakeholders.

### **Restructuring of Border Guarding Forces**

Border guarding responsibility is recommended to be changed as under:

- **Indian Army.** To be given the responsibility to manage all unresolved and disputed borders, i.e, AGPL, LC and LAC. CAPFs deployed on such borders should be under the army's operational control.

- **Assam Rifles.** To retain the responsibility of guarding the Myanmar border. The present proposal to hand over the responsibility of guarding the Myanmar to the BSF is **NOT RECOMMENDED.**
- **BSF.** To guard the Bangladesh border and the IB section of the border with Pakistan. It is recommended that the BSF be constituted into two wings, East and West, for better management due to different nuances of each border.
- **ITBP.** To be placed under the Operational Control of the Indian Army for border guarding duties on the India-China border. The ITBP should be reconstituted as a para military force on the lines of the Assam Rifles and not be a CAPF.
- **SSB.** To continue to guard the Nepal and Bhutan borders as hitherto fore.

Composition of Units deployed on border guarding duties is recommended as under:

- The battalions deployed on border guarding duties should have a significant proportion of local youth in its ranks to exploit their knowledge of terrain, language and most importantly, cultural and historic links to the region. The local troops can also be utilised as acclimatised quick reaction forces in case of unforeseen transgressions/intrusions in high altitude areas.
- Territorial Army battalions based on ex-servicemen should be raised, which can form part of border guarding CAPF. As army soldiers retire at a relatively younger age profile, a significant number can be re-enrolled in border guarding forces.

### **Involvement of Stakeholders**

Stakeholders in border areas are the people living in border areas, the state administration, border guarding forces and Central agencies involved in border development. Little coordination exists between them. In addition, as some of the border areas have sparse population, the development of such areas by the state and the Centre are at times neglected. The following is recommended;

- The development effort in border areas must be done taking all stakeholders on board.
- State governments must be actively involved in the process of finding solutions to the border issues.

- The area of responsibility for conduct of operations between the state police and the border guarding force must be institutionalised to do away with local arrangements.
- Formal interaction between army and CAPFs must be institutionalised by means of courses of instruction and joint training.

### **Technology**

At present, border guarding is excessively man power intensive. A greater infusion of technology into border guarding must be done, taking into account the peculiarities of each border segment, taking into account the perceived threat, terrain and local population sensitivities. The following is recommended: \_

- Use of state of art technology for border surveillance. Drones should form a major part of the surveillance effort in difficult and sparsely populated areas. Modern C4I2SR capabilities need to be employed to cover gaps, particularly in remote/ inaccessible areas, and to supplement human surveillance and patrolling.
- Use of GIS and digitisation of maps.
- Formation of technology committee to oversee quick procurement and Implementation.

### **Maritime Security**

The maritime security policy needs to be implemented in full earnest. As seen from the 26/11 attack, coastal areas are most vulnerable due to large length and relative ease of movement. Regular audits must be carried out to check efficacy of marine police and state structures.

### **Myanmar Border**

The major challenges on the Myanmar border arise from insurgent movement across the border, gun running, drug smuggling and illicit trade. Myanmar is a friendly country with no hostile intent towards India. We have a 16 km free movement agreement in place to allow the people on either side of the border to visit with each other, most having family relations developed over centuries. We also have no illegal immigration concerns with respect to Myanmar. The major concern with respect to Myanmar is hence not border guarding but better internal policing and good intelligence network to control illegal smuggling, drug and gun running and to curb the movement of militants. The following is therefore recommended: -

- The management of Myanmar border should continue to rest with Assam Rifles as the requisite infrastructure for border management already exists. Also, there is a seamless

integration between Assam Rifles units deployed in counter-insurgency role for quick passage of information and joint operations. The Assam Rifles troops also enjoy greater affinity with the region due to higher proportion of local youth within their ranks and cultural similarity with local population.

- The proposed construction of a fence along Myanmar border should be immediately scrapped. Construction of a fence will alienate the border population and will be detrimental to India's national security concerns. Construction of a fence in the difficult terrain will in any case be an exercise in futility due to the difficult nature of the terrain and the vast number of troops required to constantly guard the fence which even then can be easily breached. No useful purpose is hence served by constructing the fence. On the other hand, it will have negative consequences in terms of alienating the border population whose support is essential for border guarding. It will also negatively impact on the improving Indi- Myanmar relations.
- BSF has been tasked to take over the responsibility of guarding the Myanmar border. This order is recommended to be reversed and the task of border guarding kept with Assam Rifles. The raising of 41 BSF battalions for this task is consequentially redundant.
- Better results can be achieved by soliciting the assistance of villages on the border, enhancing the efficacy of local police forces, improving intelligence capability and using technology to assist in border management.

### **Bangladesh Border**

The major threat on our border with Bangladesh remains illegal migration from Bangladesh. Other concerns relate to movement of insurgents, smuggling and the like. The following is recommended: -

- Registration of citizens and non-citizens especially in border districts should be taken on priority. A pilot project has already been completed in which Multipurpose National Identity Cards (MPNIC) have been issued to some of the population both in the border districts and in the interiors. All doubtful cases should be issued with a separate identity card, till their identity is established. Aadhar card project needs to be stopped and all the data should be merged with MPNIC project.
- Work permit system could be considered.

- Residence record of villages should be maintained and updated in border districts.
- Citizenship Act should be amended to prohibit automatic grant of citizenship by birth of children of illegal migrants.
- Single statute by merging the Indian passport act of 1967 and Indian passport act of 1920.
- Provision of enhanced punishment for those violating the Indian Passport Act and including abetment clause to fix those helping illegal migration.
- Incentive must be given in terms of finances to those who detect illegal migrants.
- Amended law to provide for a minimum punishment of five years in the case of illegal immigration.

### **Economic Cooperation**

Trade must be enhanced with neighbouring countries to benefit economically as well as build the trust factor. Presently, the trade with Pakistan is minimal and the goods are transhipped via Dubai or Kabul. Smuggling of goods often termed as informal trade is almost equal to formal trade along the India-Bangladesh border. This is a drain on our economy and those involved are prone to anti national activities. The following measures can offset or minimise this illegal activity:

- Open border trade of local produce in the form of border haats. A few of them have already been opened on the Tripura and Meghalaya borders with Bangladesh. It has been found to be very popular among the locals. More such haats need to be opened all along the border areas wherever feasible.
- Generate local employment by encouraging small scale cooperative farming of products of that area.
- Open more ICPs and Land Custom Section (LCS) apart from the planned 13 ICPs for facilitating the expanding trade.

### **Development of Border Infrastructure**

Border infrastructure must be developed on a fast track basis by providing all the necessary clearances using a single window clearance system. A combination of road, rail and river

transport system will provide the requisite connectivity as well as enhance economic cooperation.

- The border road network especially along the China border needs to be expedited in Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim as the sanctioned roads are almost five to eight years from completion.
- The north south corridor road from Calcutta to Siliguri and further to Guwahati is a major link to Chinese border and northeaster region. Widening the road link to accommodate both economic transportation and security moves is a priority. This corridor needs to be further linked to the border by link roads at a number of places not only to facilitate trade and passenger traffic but also faster security moves.
- A number of rail connectivity points need to be activated for trans border transit routes from India to Bangladesh.
- The present river connectivity from Calcutta to Karimganj and beyond is limited to the monsoon period only when the minimum depth is available for transportation. This is the cheapest method of transportation and shortest route to feed our north eastern region. The waterways division needs to make a serious study to facilitate this connectivity which can extend to Bangladesh also.
- The kaladan Multi Mode Transportation Project must be commissioned earliest to provide an alternate economic link for northeast states and Myanmar.
- Border population is a very vulnerable community and this aspect needs to be looked into so that the sympathy of the border population always remains with India. It is a known fact that cellphone signals of Pakistani and Chinese operators are available in border areas. The state governments must make it mandatory for own telecom service providers to install high power towers in border areas. There is need for recruitment of locals of border population in central forces.