

# Securitization of National Borders: A Case Study of Sri Lankan Border Control Measures

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**Abstract**— National border is vital for survival of a state and protecting it is important for National security. Paying lip service to security of National borders will maintain the threat level to the National borders which in turn will impact on National security, economic security and societal security. The objective of this research is to expand the concept of securitisation and identify methods to increase the levels of securitisation taking National border as a referent object.

For this Sri Lanka's border security was studied where increase in drug trafficking was seen post 2009. One aspect of increase in the level of securitisation is strengthening of capabilities of organisations tasked with National border security which will result in effective border protection. Securitisation level can be strengthened by improving the organisational structure, operational capabilities, use of high technology and economy of effort by all actors in addition to enacting required legal provisions. In conclusion; governments should apply appropriate securitisation levels against existential threats to national borders to make border security effective.

**Keywords** -National Security, National Border, Securitisation, Existential Threat

## I. INTRODUCTION

Westphalia sovereignty is a concept that all nation states have sovereignty over their territory and the international community has agreed to respect the principle of territorial integrity. Border depicts the sovereign territory. Border Control is defined as measures taken by a state to regulate and monitor its Borders. National border is vital for survival of a state and protecting it is important for National security. When a nation has threats, it is insecure. It has to develop a strategy to survive or overcome threats in order to achieve security. Therefore, security is freedom from threats. National security is state survival. In order to survive, the border should be controlled and protected through properly structured and empowered defence organisations.

### A. Concept of Border Security

Effective Border security operations depends on capable security organisations. US Homeland Security and Defence Centre recommends the following fundamental functions for border security (Henry Willis, 2010):

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- Interdiction – disrupting illegal movements across borders
- Deterrence – convincing would be smugglers, criminals or terrorist not to attempt to cross borders illegally.
- Exploiting networked intelligence – contributing to and using shared intelligence and information across organisational boundaries.

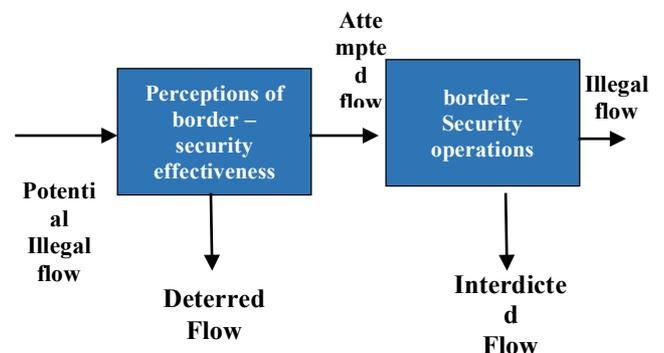


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Border Security (Source: Technical Report to Homeland Security and Defence Centre, 2010)

This is a basic concept using core functions of border security. The percentile of the deterred flow may depend on the perception of the border security. If the perception is high, the percentile of deterred flow may be high. The balance flow may attempt to cross the border taking a risk which will increase the price. At the border, a percentile of the attempted flow will get interdicted. The balance will get into the country as illegal flow.

### B. Transnational Organised Crimes (TOC)

Security threat is more prominent regionally because threats travel more easily in short distances over long distance. This implies that the security threat is severe in intra-region than inter-region. Therefore, Security is interdependent within a region but very rare among regions. Therefore, with the globalisation and increase in TOC, the most practical type of security for South Asia is the Regional security concept.

Louise Shelly says:

“ that increased movement of people and goods, one aspect of globalisation has coincided with

increasing economic and demographic disparity between developed and developing countries. This has resulted in an increase in transnational crime groups who facilitate illegal immigration for those who cannot enter developed countries legally. Therefore, the growth of transnational organised crimes has placed enhance emphasis on Border Security (Shelley, 2006).

Transnational Organised Crimes (TOC) will impact on National security to reduce the degree of survivability.

### C. Securitisation

“Securitisation means an issue is presented as an existential threat requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure” (Barry Buzan, 1998).

Existential threat to National borders impact on National security and sovereignty. National security and sovereignty are the most vital for survival of a state. Hence, states should securitised the National borders to secure it from any type of threat including of TOC. Countries where TOC rate is very high, have become fragile states.

### D. Statement of the problem

All the countries in the world have securitised their National borders using various methods. However, still all the countries face TOC at various levels. It is a puzzle how TOC occur in states where the National border is securitised.

### E. Objective

To find whether there is any factor affecting securitisation of National borders.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Sri Lankan border security was taken as a sample to identify the security effort or lack of it to understand the puzzle. In that steps taken to prevent smuggling of narcotics across Sri Lankan border was studied to understand border security of Sri Lanka. Border security agencies were evaluated to identify shortcoming in the exiting processes and quantitative method was used to collect data to analysed border violations which has resulted due to weak processes. The information collected were examined against the core functions of border security.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### F. Interdiction

In terms of interdiction effectiveness of border security could be measured by the volume of drugs seized at the border and inside the country. Availability of heroin at street level indicates failed efforts of interdiction. It is observed that the quantity of narcotics seized in Sri Lanka since 2013 has increased in many folds. The percentile of drugs seized at the border has increase from 11% in 2010 to 60% in 2014 out of the total quantity detected. If the

quantity of narcotics which was not detected inside the country has increased, then the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile will decrease. However, it could be safely assumed that 40% - 60% have manage to cross the border undetected. DG Customs has acknowledged that drugs concealed inside fruits or machine made sealed ampules cannot be detected. It is stated that 3.5Tons of heroin is smuggled in to Sri Lanka and 2.6Tons are smuggled back to Europe and Australia. International Narcotics Control Board has stated in their report for 2014, that Sri Lanka is a hub for narcotics to transit drugs coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan and India to Europe. Sri Lanka has a coast line of 1,340km long. Large quantities of narcotics enter in to Sri Lanka through the stretches between ports of entry. Narcotics smuggle from India enter the border between Mannar – Kalmunai and Velvettithurai - Mulaitivu whilst narcotics from Afghanistan smuggle by Pakistanis, Iranians and Maldivians cross Sri Lankan border at South. Coast Guard does not have adequate resources to fulfil constitutional obligations. 75.4% of container handling in Colombo Port is for transshipping and in fact Sri Lanka has transhipped 3.7Million TEUs in 2015. It could be assume that transshipping is used to re-smuggle 2.6Tons out of Sri Lanka. Hi-tech scanners are required to monitor approximately 10,000 containers per day.

The ‘on arrival visa’ process and lack of bio metrics at the immigration at the points of entry hinder border security effort. Further, access to forged birth certificates would allow obtaining of erroneous passport. All these factors contribute for border violations.

### G. Deterrence

In Sri Lanka deterrence could be measured through the number of convicted prisoners for drug related offences. The percentile for narcotics related convicted prisoners for each year from the total number of convicted prisoners are maintained within the range of 30%-45%. However, 45%-55% from the number of narcotic related court cases are acquitted each year due to various reasons.

### H. Exploiting Networked Intelligence

There are 4 departments under 3 Ministries responsible for border security at the ports of entry. This structure undermine economy of effort and affect intelligence sharing. This situation hamper counter narcotics operations.

### I. Concept of Securitization Levels

Sri Lanka Government has securitised the border to secure National Security and Sovereignty. But the border is being violated on the daily basis endangering Economic security and health security of the country and most importantly regional and world security by acting as a hub for narcotics transshipment. The reason for continuous border violations could be the extent of securitisation of the border. Securitisation could be strengthen or the ‘Level of securitisation’ could be increase by establishing effective security agencies, posting adequate resources, enacting

strong legal provisions to arrest, detain and punish criminals who violate the border.

Capabilities of security agencies will depend on new processes, additional resources, assets and new technology.

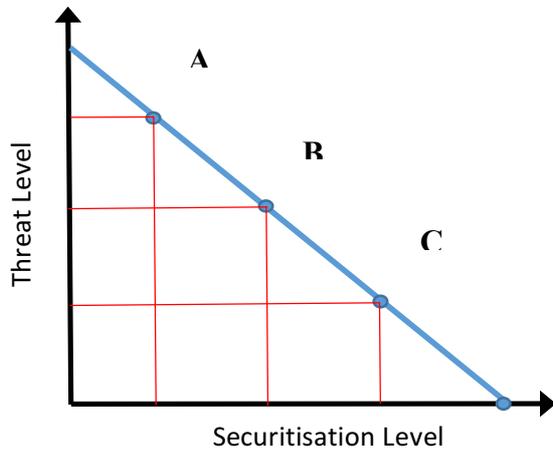


Figure 2: Relationship between Securitization Level and Threat Level

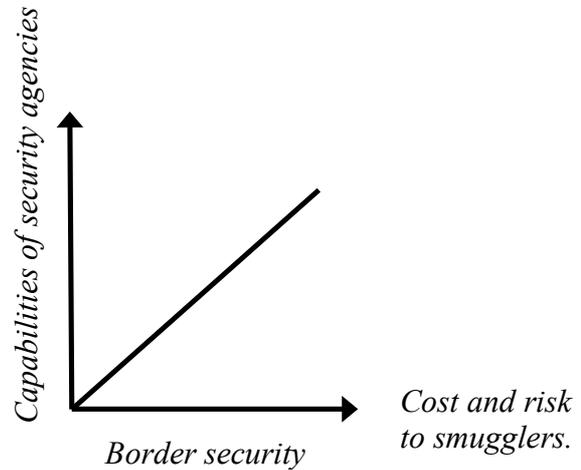


Figure 3: Relationship between capabilities of security agencies and border security:

Table 1: Relationship between Securitization Level and Threat Level

	Securitization Level	Threat Level
A	One security agency, Insufficient budgets and resources including manpower, Weak legal provision to arrest.	(High) Increases with time
B	A few security agencies empowered for security, Just manageable budget and man power, normal legal course for arrest	Medium (Threat is maintain by the government)
C	Many security agencies under one authority to cover all aspects of the threat, sufficient budgets, assets and HR are allocated and strong legal provisions are enact to deter offenders.	Low (Eliminate the threat with time)

### III. CONCLUSION

Any government will securitise the border to protect territorial integrity and thereby sovereignty. The securitisation is done by establishing security agencies and enacting laws to protect the border through core functions of border security; interdiction and deterrence. Respective governments should make these security agencies capable by allocating necessary resources in terms of budgets, skill man power, assets, hi-tech equipment and with required legal powers. These resources and legal powers will increase the capabilities of the security agencies. The extent the government's increase the capabilities could be termed as 'Level of securitisation'. The threat level at the border will depend on the Level of securitisation of the border which will depend on the capabilities of border security agencies and laws related to border security.

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Lt. Colonel Athula Lankadeva joined Sri Lanka Army in 1980 and was awarded “Rana Wickrama Padakkama” and “Rana Soora Padakkam” for valour on the battle field and “Uttama Seva Padakkama” for meritorious service by the President. A graduate from Defence Services Command and Staff

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