

Case study : Nepal-India Border Management and Its Challenges and Opportunities



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Outline of Presentation

1. History of border management of Nepal
2. Objectives of the study
3. Case Study :
 - Belahi (Nepal) - Nautanuw (India) crossing point
4. Opportunities and challenges of open border
5. Reactions on open border
6. Recommendation for alternative border management
7. Conclusion

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Background

Location of Nepal

- Nepal is a landlocked sovereign state.
- It is situated between two emerging Asian giants, India and China
 - On the north, there is the Himalayan range, as there is a regulated border regime .
 - On the south, there are neither natural walls nor man made fences, as there is an open border system.



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History of Nepal-India Border Management:

1. **Closed border system:** It was prevalent in ancient period, especially for third country nationals before 1816 Sugauli Treaty.
2. **Controlled border:** It was initiated after 1816 for Indian nationals as well.
3. **Open border:** Started slowly and unknowingly after the restoration of *New Territory* in 1860.

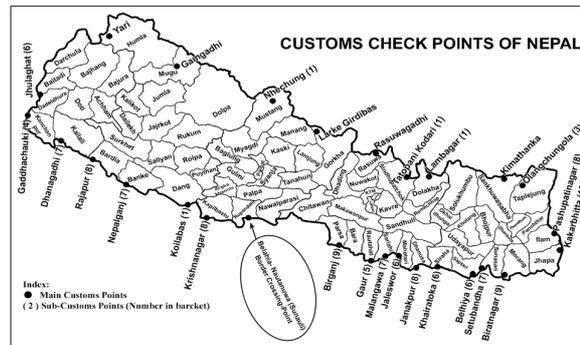
- to recruit the British Gorkha regiment,
- to sell finished goods by British India up to Tibet via Nepal,
- to import raw materials (timber, herb plants, animal hides and skins) from Nepal.



- However, passport / permit / *Rahadani* was necessary to cross the border.

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- At present there is an informal open border regime between Nepal and India.
- There are 19 main border crossing points.



- People of both the countries can cross the international border without any interrogation from anywhere of the border line. ♣

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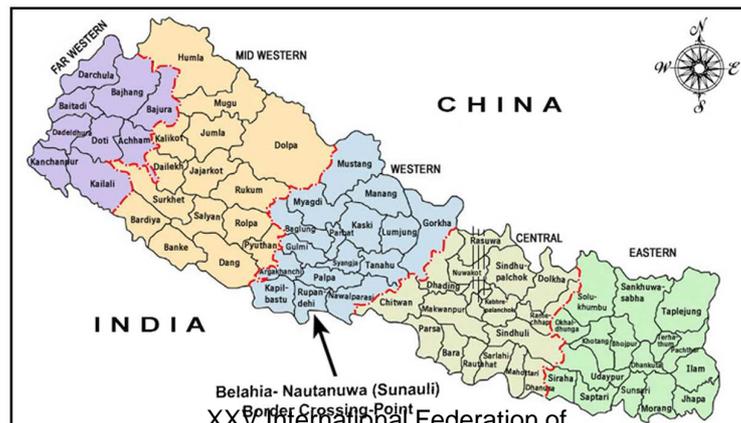
Objectives

- To make a case study on the opportunities and challenges of free and unrestricted movements of people of Nepal and India across the international border.
- Items of opportunities.
- Items of challenges emerged by the open border regime.
- How the international border has been misused by unwanted people of third country nationals.
- Negative and positive impact of open border on both the countries.
- Suggest some ways and means to overcome these challenges, for the benefit of both nations. ♣

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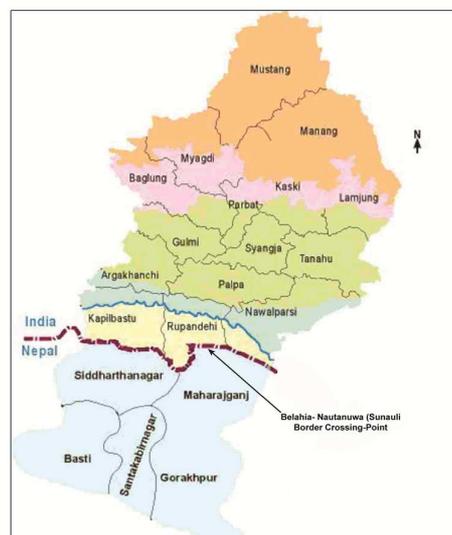
Case Study

- There are 19 main border crossing points between Nepal and India.
- Belahia (Nepal) - Nautanua (India) is one of the crossing points.
- It is located at mid-southern Nepal.
- This is the busiest crossing of all 19 border points.



Belahia- Nautanua (Sunauli)
Border Crossing-Point
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- Belahia - Nautanua (Sunauli) crossing adjoins the Rupandehi district of Nepal and Maharajganj district of India.
- Highest number of third country tourists enter Nepal through Belhaia land route crossing-point.



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Nepal Frontier Border-Crossing Gate



Indian Frontier Border-Crossing Gate



Belahia-Nautanua (Nepal-India) Border-Crossing Gates on both the Frontiers

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Movement of travelers

According to Immigration Office, Belahia during 2013 :

- Third country travelers crossed this land border crossing-point (with passport and visa) :
 - 117,203 entered into Nepali territory.
 - 110,481 passengers crossed the international border to India.
- Nepali and Indian nationals crossed the border (no need of document):
 - 832,000 inhabitants travelled to Nepali frontier from India (approx):
 - 548,000 Nepali nationals (approx.)
 - 284,000 Indian nationals.
 - 924,000 people crossed Nepal to Indian frontier (approx):
 - 680,000 Nepali nationals (approx.)
 - 244,000 Indian nationals.

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Opportunities and Challenges

There are opportunities and challenges of free and unrestricted movement of people of Nepal and India, through open border.

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Opportunities

There are opportunities of the open border regime such as:

- Convenience in movement across the international border without any hassle.



- Facility of quick response during hazard and natural calamities:
 - There was fire hazard in Ilam of Nepal. Fire Brigade brought instantly from Darjeeling (India) put off the fire.



- Medical services facility:
 - Indian frontier inhabitants could come to Sagarmatha Choudhary Eye Hospital, Lahan Nepal to get the treatment without any obstruction.



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- Supply of local labours:
 - Indian labours from Arariya (India) come to Nepal for paddy cultivation and harvesting without any restriction.



- Immediate supply of food-grains.



- Competitive border market. ♣

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Challenges

Cross-border terrorism :

- Abdul Karim Tunda, one of India's 20 most wanted top Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists, was arrested by the Special Cell of Delhi Police from the Indo-Nepal border on 16 August 2013.
- Yasin Bhatkal, one of India's most wanted terrorism suspect was arrested near India's border with Nepal on 28 August 2013. Bhatkal is the co-founder of the Indian Mujahideen, a militant group banned in India and listed by the United States as a foreign terrorist organization.



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Trans-border crime :

- Indian criminal Bablu Dubey, who did 36 crimes in India sneaked Nepal through open border, was arrested by Nepal Police on 29 May 2013.



Trafficking of narcotic drugs :

- Indian para-military (SSB) seized in Indo-Nepal porous border Patna Frontier, over 1,892 kg marijuana, 63.9 kg hashis, 1 kg brown sugar and 500 gm heroin worth total 1 million US\$ in January 2011 alone.



Smuggling of goods and machinery .

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Infiltration of third country nationals in a disguised manner :

- Bangladeshi citizen use to cross Nepal-India porous border illegally in the disguised of Indian national (West Bengal).
- Such is the case from Pakistani, Afghani, Iranian citizens Indian (Uttar Pradesh State) nationals etc.
- Similarly, Bhutanese and Mynmarian citizens cross the border illegally in the disguise of Nepali nationals.
- If we stay and look for one or two hours in the Thamel street market of Kathmandu, we can identify such non-status third country citizens.



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Transportation of fake Indian currency Notes from third country via Nepal to India :

- Shekh Muhammad was arrested with Rs. 905 million Indian fake currency Notes on 7 June 2013.
- Aasin Miya was arrested with Rs. 6.9 million on 28 May 2012 in Bara district border.



Smuggling of gold :

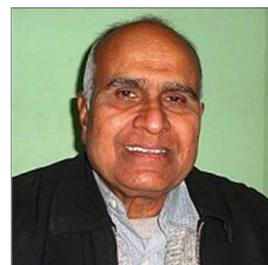
- Nepal Police arrested Amit Sarraf of Raxaul, an Indian national, with smuggled gold in Parwanipur from Indian border bound bus on 19 May 2014.



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Abduction of businessmen and their children :

- Nepali industrialist Ganga Bishan Rathi was abducted from Biratnagar, Nepal and he was taken to Silguri, India and he was killed on 10 January 2013, after 23 days of his abduction.
- Nepali businessman Tulsi Ram Agrawal was abducted and taken to the other side of the border. He was released after the monetary negotiation



Abducted industrialist Mr. Tulsi Ram Agrawal, after enquiry at Morang District Court on 26 Shrawan 2063

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Illegal transaction of small arms and gun-powder :

- Police have arrested seven people with a dozen of small arms and ammunition from Morang, Sunsari, Jhapa, Saptari and Siraha over the last one month period. September 2013.

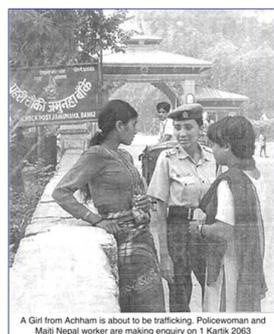


- The Indo-Nepal open border, according to security personnel, has helped in smuggling small arms manufactured in India.

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Trafficking of girls and women :

- *Maiti* Nepal, a social organization, rescued 264 girls and women (15-28 years old) during 2013 in the Belahia-Nautanuws (Sunauli) border crossing point. They were supposed to be sold in Indian brothels. ♣



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Reactions on open border system

- Newly elected Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi said on 27 May 2014:

- Nepal and India should be mindful of mutual security concerns as they share an open border.



- Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said during Chief Ministers conference in New Delhi on 21 April 2012:

- Open border with Nepal poses security challenges to Bihar. It needs center's support to regulate the border to check cross-border crimes.



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- Indian Ambassador to Nepal Ranjeet Rae has said on 12 February 2014 in an interview to the Kathmandu Post Daily:

- We have open border. Someone commits crime in one country and runs to the other.
- This is a problem for both countries.
- Open border has been misused by people who do not have the best interests of the two countries by heart.



- It was agreed between the IGP of Nepal and Chief of Indian SSB on 3 December 2012:

- to fight against transportation of small arms, human trafficking and smugglings of fake Indian currency Notes.



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- On a meeting of Joint Secretaries of Home Ministries of Nepal and India on 22 September 2011:
 - Nepal formally requested Indian help to nab 367 alleged criminals living in the Indian territory and hand them over to Nepal authorities
- US Country Report on Terrorism-2009 says:
 - In June 2009 Lashkar-e-Tayyiba member Muhammad Omar Madani travelled through Nepal en-route to New Delhi through the ungoverned space along Nepal-India border. ♣

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Recommendations for alternative border management

- In order maintain internal and external security system, to address the challenges of open border and to make Indo-Nepal border safe and secure-:
 - An alternative measure should be implemented as:
 1. Introducing ID card system / Monitoring with CCTV camera.
 2. Fencing the frontier.

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1. introducing ID card system / monitoring with CCTV camera

Most of the countries of the world have adopted ID Card system

- Introducing ID card system is pragmatic for Nepal and India, for the security reason, in a phase wise basis.



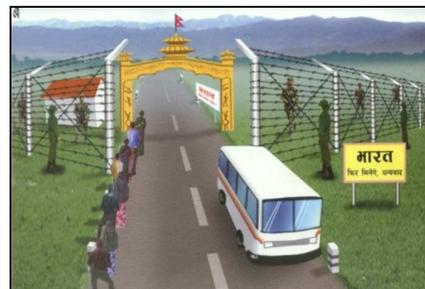
- Canada and USA has the open border system, but ID has to be produced while crossing the border.



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2. Fencing the frontier

*“Good fences make good neighbors.”
-Robert Frost*

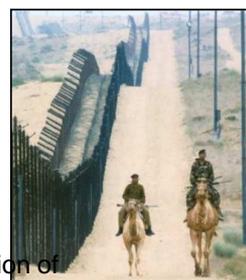


It will be not too bad to erect barbed wire fencing between Nepal and India with 360 exit /entry points.



- Bangladesh and India (Tripura) has raised in 856 km. wire fencing.

- India and Pakistan have common barbed iron fencing (2,912 km). ♣



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Conclusion

- Open border has been misused by the terrorists, criminals, traffickers and unwanted elements.
- It has affected the peace and security of not only Nepal and India, but also the other countries of South Asia.
 - So Nepal-India open border should be turned into regulated system in a step wise basis to address the challenges.
 - It has to be agreed by both the governments for the benefit and security of people of both nations.
- A system to show the ID Card / monitoring with CCTV camera, while crossing the international border, should be implemented in a phase wise basis along 1,880 Km long border.
- But visa system should not be introduced because of the perspective of age old friendship between the government to government and people to people level relationship.

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Conclusion ...

For the security reason, Nepal-India international border must be:

- Restricted for the terrorists.
 - Controlled for smugglers.
 - Checked for criminals.
 - Obstructed for girl traffickers.
 - Stopped for narcotic holders.
 - Vigilant for smuggler of fake Indian currency Notes.
- But there must not be delayed for genuine passengers, to cross the international border. ♣

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Thank you



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