

Securing the Sarawak Kalimantan Frontier: Navigating Dilemma and Strategic Approaches

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Abstract: Securing vast and porous border regions, exemplified by the 1,645 kilometres stretch between Sarawak (Malaysia) and Kalimantan (Indonesia), poses unique and formidable dilemmas for security agencies. This shared boundary encompasses diverse geographical features, including rivers, vast land expanses, rugged terrains, and dense forests, which pose significant challenges for authorities to efficiently control and monitor the movement of people and goods. Furthermore, because of its remote geographical location, this border area is vulnerable to non-traditional security threats, such as encroachment, human and goods smuggling, and trafficking. This study delves into the complexities of border security in Sarawak by employing in-depth interviews with various security agencies and on-site observations to comprehensively examine and address these dilemmas. The findings of the study highlight how difficult topographical conditions at these borders have hampered efficient border control measures, such as building fences and barriers, deploying CCTV surveillance, and establishing border control stations. This has made it difficult for authorities to monitor and track the entry and exit of individuals and goods, contributing to the emergence of illegal pathways known as 'jalan tikus' and 'jalan gajah' by locals, giving rise to cross-border crime activities. In addition, this study outlines other issues faced by border security agencies, such as a lack of resources, manpower, advanced technology, border conflicts, and constraints on military authority. By shedding light on these multifaceted dilemmas, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the border security complexities in the Sarawak-Kalimantan region. These findings underscore the critical need for a comprehensive approach to effectively safeguard borders and mitigate associated risks, thus providing a valuable resource for guiding future endeavours in border security management.

Keywords: Border security, border security challenges, non-traditional security threats, Sarawak-Kalimantan border

1. Introduction

The responsibility of defending border security, whether land, air, or maritime borders, is subject to the jurisdiction of the federal government according to the Ninth Schedule of the Federal Constitution. The Federal government is implicitly obligated by the Constitution to ensure the maintenance of law, order, and national sovereignty in the border areas. This effort to defend border security manifests itself in the development of security policies overseen and coordinated by the National Security Council (NSC), as well as the execution of operations carried out by security and enforcement agencies such as the General Operations Force (GOF), Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF), Malaysian Immigration Department, the Royal Malaysian Customs Department, the Royal Malaysian Navy, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, and Marine Operations. However, due to its remote location from the central administration and the rugged terrain of wilderness and hills, the land border context presents unique challenges. This configuration makes it more difficult to safeguard security effectively. Notably, the country's

longest international border, 1,645 kilometers from Kalimantan, Indonesia, adds to the difficulty of supervising and managing traffic in and out of Sarawak, necessitating meticulous strategies to navigate these complexities. In light of this concern, this study delineates two primary goals: (i) to examine the dilemmas faced by border security agencies in maintaining the integrity of the land border connecting Sarawak and Kalimantan, and (ii) to explore effective strategies for fostering a secure and stable environment within the border region. The intent of this evaluation aimed to address the dilemma faced by these security agencies, ultimately contributing to the overall enhancement of security and management measures.

Numerous empirical studies conducted worldwide have consistently highlighted a resounding truth: the delineation of a border on official maps, the deployment of security personnel, or the construction of control towers often pale in significance when compared to individuals' critical needs and aspirations (Baud & Schendel, 1997). This phenomenon is especially noticeable when people share borders with economically advanced countries (Carter and Poast, 2017). This reality is exemplified by regions with significant economic disparities, such as the shared border between Mexico and the United States. Sarawak and Kalimantan have similar dynamics, where Sarawak has a distinct economic advantage. Similar instances have been found in southern Thailand and Malaysia's northern states. These socioeconomic disparities have demonstrably contributed to the emergence of illegal cross-border activities, which frequently culminate in criminal endeavors, referred to as cross-border crimes. Many studies have effectively demonstrated the link between illegal activities and border stability in the context of economic disparities between countries. Andreas (2000), Tagliacozzo (2005), Naim (2005), Wadley and Eilenberg (2005), Pellerin (2005), Wadley (2006), Abuza (2011), Wain (2012), Eilenberg (2012), Rosenblum et al. (2013) and Fauzi et al. (2013), Carter and Poast (2017), Ramli et al. (2016), and Rafidah Dahari et al. (2019). These empirical studies support the hypothesis that economic disparities can significantly influence the dynamics of cross-border criminal activities, emphasizing the interplay between economic differences and border stability.

National borders are enduring symbols of sovereign nations, encapsulating not only geography and territorial sovereignty but also the legal jurisdiction held by governments over activities, entities, and individuals contained within their borders (Gerstein et al., 2018; Meyers, 2005; Rumford, 2006). This profound significance extends even further into the realm of state security, a key tenet of realism (Starr 2006). Consequently, each sovereign nation is required to protect and fortify its borders against all types of security threats that could jeopardize its existence. However, maintaining border security and integrity is difficult. Numerous global studies have revealed the perplexing reality that security agencies are confronted with a number of challenges that are exacerbated by the emergence of non-traditional security threats. Nonetheless, studies specifically addressing the challenges encountered by security agencies in Sarawak remain relatively scarce. Noor Azmi et al. (2019) and (2020) conducted research with a broader scope, addressing challenges that arise at the broader Malaysian borders. As the complexities of each border within Peninsular Malaysia differ significantly, it is critical to decipher the nuanced dynamics of these sarawak-specific challenges. For example, distinctive border infrastructures such as fences, walls, and security roads can be found in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia in relation to southern Thailand, whereas a more comprehensive infrastructure can be found in southern Peninsular Malaysia in relation to Singapore. Hence, compared to regions lacking such border infrastructure, this comprehensive infrastructure is expected to present fewer challenges. Moreover, existing research on the Sarawak-Kalimantan border has primarily focused on the communities that live in border regions, covering issues such as identity, culture, and economy (Majid Cooke, 1999; Ketut et al., 2004; Awang Abd Hair et al., 2013; Juanenah et al., 2013; Noor Rahamah Abu Bakar et al., 2017; Yusten Karulus & Askandar, 2020). However, only a few scholars have focused on the critical aspects of security and border control (Wadley & Eilenberg, 2005; Eilenberg, 2012; Julie & Gusni, 2019; Nuurianti & Ismail, 2020; Zulkipli & Askandar, 2021). As a result, there is a research gap in comprehensively addressing the complexities of security challenges in the context of the Sarawak-Kalimantan border region.

Sarawak Land Borders

Sarawak has land borders with Brunei and Indonesia, as well as maritime borders with Singapore, Philippines, and China. The state's vast maritime border, as well as its longest land border in Malaysia, is located along a thick

and hilly tropical rainforest, making the monitoring and deployment of border control posts difficult. The country's geographical location and remote border areas have exacerbated non-traditional security threats, such as invasion, smuggling of goods and people, kidnapping, and human trafficking. However, the kinship relationship that existed between people living in the border area prior to the existence of the borderline has contributed to the dynamism of these nontraditional security threat activities. As argued by Bala (2001), many communities on both sides of the border share common ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identities, traits that existed and were practiced long before James Brooke arrived on Borneo's soils. Hence, the movement of people and goods that were previously free prior to the establishment of the border line is now considered illegal in the eyes of the law if it does not adhere to established rules. This has created a quandary not only for the government in terms of border management but also for the border community.

The Sarawak-Kalimantan border is the result of several agreements between the two colonial powers, the British and the Dutch, namely the 1824 Agreement, the 1891 Treaty, the 1915 Treaty, and the 1926 Convention. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) 1973 is a document of agreement between Malaysia and Indonesia based on the Conventions of 1891, 1915, and 1928. The content of this MoU agreement relates to the survey and division of the boundary between Malaysia and Indonesia in terms of determining taxes, immigration, area, degree of implementation, and others (Julie, 2019). As a result, the border region between West Kalimantan and Sarawak has long been populated by local people with relatives on both sides of the border (Baud & Schendel, 1997). There are 116 villages, 15 districts, and five regencies that stretch over the borderline (Muazir and Hsieh, 2013). Fifty roads connect 55 settlements in West Kalimantan with 32 villages in Sarawak along the 966 km border between the two states (Karim, 2015). On the other hand, communities near borders have been using unofficial land entry exit channels. Interstate border posts have been agreed upon for 16 communities in West Kalimantan and 10 villages in Sarawak (Pos Lintas Batas; PLBs). In these villages, 16 border posts (PLBs) serve as entry and exit points for the West Kalimantan and Sarawak border regions. In addition, there were three official border crossings: Biawak, Tebedu, and Lubok Antu. Entikong PLB in West Kalimantan and Tebedu PLB in Sarawak were upgraded to the Entikong-Tebedu Cross-Border Checkpoint (Pos Pemeriksaan Lintas Batas; PPLB) in 1991 to signify the formal cross-border movement of persons and products in the border region of West Kalimantan and Sarawak.

Methods

This study adopted two purposeful sampling methodologies: criterion and snowball sampling. Criterion Sampling was strategically chosen to elicit factual insights into the complex border challenges. This strategy enabled the targeted acquisition of knowledge by selecting informants who met the established criteria. Notably, Sarawak's General of Force (GOF) has emerged as a deliberate selection tool for providing in-depth and comprehensive data relevant to the research subject. In parallel, the Snowball Sampling technique allowed for the deliberate expansion of informant variety. Additional important information linked to the GOF was successfully involved in the research, including the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) Sarawak, the Royal Malaysian Customs Department's Sarawak division, the Malaysian Immigration Department, the National Security Council (Malaysia) in Sarawak, and Sukarelawan Malaysia (RELA), who were completely immersed in the study's subject, contributed invaluable experiential and knowledgeable insights, and significantly strengthened the research's core underpinnings.

This study followed thorough data-gathering techniques, entailing a comprehensive range of data sources and an extensive on-ground presence. The research employed an immersive approach, conducting in-depth interviews spanning a duration of three (3) to four (4) hours per session. These interviews were designed to delve into the perspectives of government officials on this subject. Interviews were conducted with a blend of Bahasa Melayu and Bahasa Melayu Sarawak. In addition, the researchers conducted fieldwork and observational research at the Sarawak-West Kalimantan borderline, devoting one (1) to two (2) days for each fieldwork endeavor. The subsequent analysis, aided by the use of Atlas.ti software, revealed a number of prominent thematic patterns, which are further elaborated in the next section. In the realm of ethical considerations, it is critical to address key ethical issues, as identified by Hatch (2002). In congruence with these ethical imperatives, a firm's commitment to ethical principles is maintained throughout the research process. This becomes particularly salient due to informants' engagement, which necessitates a substantial investment in their time. This engagement entails

intricate negotiations with security agencies, entry into the research area, and the collection of both personal and emotional data that reveal the deep aspects of their reflections. Furthermore, because of the sensitivity of personal disclosure, protecting informant identity is a crucial concern. In line with this, anonymization measures have been rigorously implemented, where informant designations such as A1, A2, A3, etc. have been adopted in lieu of actual names, positions, and affiliations. Verbatim transcription of the in-depth interviews was executed in the original language to retain the nuanced essence of the unfurled narratives. Subsequently, the content underwent a secondary transcription process in English, the designated language for the subsequent writing phase.

2. Findings and Discussion

This section elaborates on the findings and analysis of this study. This study highlights several pivotal insights concerning the diverse dilemmas encountered by security agencies in ensuring the security of the Sarawak-Kalimantan border, based on a series of six (6) in-depth interviews and three (3) field excursions conducted between October 2021 and March 2022. Table 1.1 provides a complete summary of these findings by encapsulating their synthesis.

Table 1.1: Types of challenges encountered by the border security agencies and its implications

Types of challenges	Details	Implications
Challenging geographical condition	Vast, porous, rugged terrain, coupled with dense forest	Difficult to build physical barriers like walls or fences; install border post for the defense and security purposes
		Existence of illegal path locally known as ' <i>jalan tikus</i> ' and ' <i>jalan gajah</i> '
		Proliferation of cross-border crimes activities
Non-existence of ' <i>jalan keselamatan</i> '	Pivotal pathway for security and defense	Hamper effective surveillance efforts
Inadequate resources	Lack of manpower	Inefficiency in border patrol operations
		Imbalance in deployment of security forces at the border
	Insufficient patrol vehicle	Hinder efficient monitoring and surveillance activities by the security forces
	Absence of advanced equipment-drone, CCTV	Critical need for advanced tools to facilitate smoother surveillance operations.
Border disputes	Indonesia	Contested arrays; present complex issues that must be navigated
Limitations on military authority	No authority to arrest, search and seizure	Hinder its capacity to safeguard the border efficiently.

Sources: Author's illustration

Challenging Geographical Conditions

Sarawak's extensive and porous land border traverses rugged terrains and dense forests, presenting significant vulnerabilities that give rise to a spectrum of threats encompassing both traditional and non-traditional. These vulnerabilities manifest in three key implications pertaining to the installation of border posts, the presence of illicit pathways, and the proliferation of cross-border criminal activities.

Difficulties in Establishing Border Infrastructure: The challenging geographical conditions prevalent along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border create obstacles in implementing robust border security measures. The unique

topography characterized by rivers, extensive land areas, and steeply elevated hills within dense forests presents formidable challenges, hindering the construction of essential security infrastructure such as walls, fences, and even the installation of surveillance systems such as CCTV. Likewise, these geographical intricacies hinder the feasibility of erecting border control posts. Border posts are significant because of their critical role in bolstering security, and they serve as vantage points where border security personnel can be stationed to monitor cross-border activities. Sarawak currently has three (3) Integrated Checkpoints (ICQS)* with Kalimantan: ICQS Biawak, Lundu, ICQS Tebedu, and ICQS Lubok Antu. These (CIQS) hold crucial significance, serving as a vital instrument for enhancing Malaysia-Indonesia security cooperation. Simultaneously, it enables a well-organized framework for border trade management. Additionally, there are six (6) immigration posts including Pos Imigresen Serikin in Bau, Pos Imigresen Padawan in Padawan, Pos Imigresen Bunan Gega in Serian, Pos Imigresen Batu Lintang in Sri Aman, Pos Imigresen Bario in Miri, and Pos Imigresen Ba'kelalan in Limbang. By contrast, Sarawak has four (4) ICQs with Brunei: ICQS Sungai Tujuh, ICQS Tedungan, ICQS Pandaruan, and ICQS Mengkalap. Furthermore, one (1) ICQS, ICQS Merapok, was established between Sarawak and Sabah. The discrepancy in the number of ICQs between Sarawak and Brunei can be attributed to the distinct geographical natures of Sarawak and Kalimantan. Hence, the lack of sufficient border posts has far-reaching consequences. This deficiency severely limits the ability to maintain vigilant oversight and effectively monitor the movements of both people and goods, especially given the existence of illegal pathways.

Existence of Illegal Pathways: The intricate topography along the border poses challenges that complicate the placement of border control posts. Consequently, this has contributed to the emergence of illicit routes known to locals as 'jalan tikus' (rat path) or 'jalan gajah' (elephant path). The presence of these illicit routes along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border is one of the most pressing challenges confronted by authorities. This concern has been acknowledged by Sarawak's Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Openg, who expressed: "What concerns us are these 'jalan tikus'." Typically, 'jalan tikus' is narrow and can only accommodate pedestrians and motorcycles, while 'jalan gajah' is wider and can accommodate larger vehicles, including four-wheeled vehicles. These pathways serve dual purposes: catering to both positive and negative intentions. On one hand, they provide convenient access to border communities seeking to visit families or relatives in neighboring countries. However, these paths have been constructed by individuals with vested interests and malicious intentions, particularly for the illegal movement of goods or individuals. As informants A1 and A6 noted, this illicit pathway could be intentionally established and closed as required, driven by malevolent intentions. In contrast, the path frequently used by villagers for legal small businesses or visiting relatives in neighboring villages remains largely unchanged. The GOF conducted a thorough investigation and discovered 61 illegal pathways along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border. This numerical density highlights the complex challenge posed by these unauthorized routes, as they significantly complicate effective border control. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes the link between geographical complexities, the lack of border infrastructure, and the vulnerabilities created by these hidden pathways, which in turn lead to the proliferation of cross-border crime activities.

Proliferation of Cross-border Crime Activities: The presence of illegal pathways combined with limited surveillance capabilities has facilitated an increase in cross-border crime activities. In-depth interviews with all informants have shed light on the security threats embedded in cross-border criminal activities, revealing the region's cascading effects. The table below (Table 1.2) outlines major border security threats and their consequences for the state.

Table 1.2: Security threat at border and its impact

Category	Details	Security impacts on the state
Flow of people and animals	The flow of people across borders, particularly daily movement by Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (TKI), has boosted the Sarawak economy, but the uncontrolled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illegal migration (PATI) ▪ Human trafficking ▪ Health/Disease ▪ Terrorism

	movement of people has harmed the state and border communities. Movement of infected humans and animals is also a serious threat.	
Flow of goods	The movement of illegal, dangerous, and undeclared goods across borders poses a number of physical threats and financial consequences for neighbouring countries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illicit materials ▪ Drugs ▪ Weapons ▪ Counterfeit goods ▪ Movement of taxable goods

Source: Authors' illustration

While the influx of Indonesian workers benefits the Sarawak economy, it also poses significant risks, such as illegal migration, human trafficking, and disease transmission. At the same time, the infiltration of illegal and undeclared goods has far-reaching implications for the region. Informants unanimously agree that these activities endanger Malaysia, with Sarawak being particularly vulnerable. Smuggled items include taxable items, such as gas cylinders, sugar, and cooking oil, as well as illegal items, such as drugs, weapons, and alcoholic beverages. According to informant A1, these smuggling activities endanger the survival of Sarawak's economy.

“Controlled goods such as rice, sugar, oil, onions, and especially sugar are smuggled from Sarawak to Kalimantan. This contributes to Sarawak's losses as these goods should be taxed by foreigners who buy more than the stipulated amount each month, according to the agreement between the two countries”

Smuggling for controlled goods at the Sarawak border primarily occurs through illegal routes. Authorities have made numerous arrests after discovering that the arrested items were daily and subsidized items such as onions, oil, rice, milo, sugar, and gas barrels. Furthermore, agricultural products such as vegetables and fish are smuggled across borders, as confirmed by informant A4. Those arrested are mostly locals and Indonesians who are prosecuted under the Customs Act of 1967 and the Controlled Goods Act of 1961. Meanwhile, illegal drugs, poisons, and weapons will be prosecuted under the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1952, the Poison Act of 1952, and the Weapons Act of 1960. Subsequent illegal cross-border activities include the unauthorized entry of illegal immigrants. According to Informant A2, there was a significant increase in the apprehension of undocumented migrants during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to previous years. This increase can be attributed to their lack of valid travel documentation to enter Malaysia, which forced them to return to Indonesia. Op Benteng is a notable countermeasure that has been used to address this issue. This initiative implemented an eviction strategy that included the imposition of a movement control order. Op Benteng, developed in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act of 1988 (Act 342) and carried out by the National Task Force (NTF), focuses on limiting the movement of unauthorized immigrants.

Human trafficking is a stark reality in Sarawak, where Indonesian migrants enticed by false promises are frequently exploited by unintended industries. Informant A3 highlighted the deceptive tactics used by agents to recruit people for work in entertainment centers. This is not an unusual occurrence; in fact, it is common in Peninsular Malaysia. This migrant smuggling and human trafficking practice cast an unsettling shadow resembling a form of modern-day slavery. In this context, individuals are treated as commodities, subject to transactions similar to goods, blatantly disregarding their inherent human rights. According to Mohd Bakri's observations in 2010, Malaysia serves as both a destination and transit country for such activities, while also emerging as a low-level source country in this perplexing web of exploitation. Malaysia's legislative response, which includes the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling Act (ATIPSOM) 2007, shows its commitment to addressing such concerns. As we conclude our examination of cross-border criminal activities, one major concern emerges-the lack of a dedicated security road known as ‘*jalan keselamatan*’.

Non-existence of ‘jalan keselamatan’

The issue of the non-existence of ‘*jalan keselamatan*’ in the Sarawak border regions is particularly important when linked to the previously discussed cross-border crimes. The absence of a security road exacerbates border vulnerabilities, making the task of security agencies even more difficult and emphasizing the need for a comprehensive solution. Security roads are critical in allowing security agencies to conduct efficient patrols using vehicles as stressed by informants A1, A2, A3 and A5. This accelerates patrolling, improves the overall efficiency, and broadens the range of coverage. However, owing to regulatory constraints, constructing an upper safety road in Sarawak presents challenges. Sarawak adheres to Chapter 81 of Sarawak Land Code 38(1)(D), which designates a 500-meter buffer zone from the border line, as pointed out by informant A3. Consequently, neither construction nor commercial activities are permitted within this span, which extends into the state of Sarawak. Tan Sri James Masing (2019) spearheaded notable efforts to establish such a security road. When considering the construction of a secure road, it is necessary to erect a corresponding safety fence as a preliminary measure. This is similar to the approach taken along the border between Perlis and Thailand, where a three-tier security system comprising walls, fences, and security roads is in place. The safety road, designated as the first line of defense, assumes critical importance, especially given Indonesia's implementation of similar infrastructure.

Inadequate Resources

One of the major dilemmas confronting border security forces is a lack of resources, including manpower, vehicles, and advanced equipment. With 250 personnel spread across the Kuching, Bintulu, and Sri Aman platoons in 2021, the GOF Brigade Sarawak fails to adequately cover the vast lengths of the Sarawak-Kalimantan and Sarawak-Brunei borders. This deficiency, shared by other border security agencies, impedes effective surveillance and control efforts, particularly in densely forested areas. Informants agreed that ensuring optimal border security necessitates a comprehensive approach that includes financial allocation, logistical support, and personnel strength. This sentiment is reflected in their strong advocacy for increased Malaysian security force deployment and the establishment of border posts along the Sarawak-Kalimantan land border. In comparison, Indonesia has over 34 guard posts, surpassing Malaysia's count of 21, as shared by informants A1 and A2. Notably, Indonesia has 55 posts, representing a one-third ratio compared to Malaysia's figure. While this revelation sparked public concern, informants pointed out that Malaysia's posts are permanent, as opposed to certain temporary Indonesian installations. While this situation is not a cause for concern, it emphasizes the need for additional control points, particularly in strategically significant areas, to combat ongoing cross-border criminal activity.

A permanent control post has a physical structure and is staffed by a PGA or an ATM officer on duty. Officers typically rotate for three months before relocating to another post. Such permanent posts are outfitted with amenities that facilitate the transit of people from neighboring countries. A non-permanent control post, on the other hand, lacks a fixed physical presence and functions as a transitory checkpoint that shifts in accordance with superiors' orders. Furthermore, as mentioned by informant A1, a significant challenge is the scarcity of vehicles suitable for patrolling challenging terrain. The informants concur on the importance of using four-wheel drive vehicles in such difficult terrains. These vehicles not only strengthen border security but also protect security personnel. Moreover, the security team is constrained by the lack of advanced surveillance equipment, specifically drones, and a CCTV system. According to Informant A3, the use of drones is critical because it allows for the monitoring of large areas that would be impractical to cover the foot. The use of these advanced tools, as exemplified in Peninsular Malaysia, in conjunction with the construction of fences demonstrates their effectiveness in improving border supervision. As a result, a compelling case is made for Sarawak to incorporate these tools to improve the efficacy and efficiency of its ground control efforts.

Border Disputes

A political concern rooted in Malaysia and Indonesia's territorial dispute is at the forefront of the challenges present along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border. This has resulted in the persistence of unresolved territorial conflicts, such as Camar Bulan in Sarawak, between Temajuk, Kalbar, and Teluk Melano. Amid these disputes, Malaysia's construction of lighthouses within these contested areas has only exacerbated the existing conflict.

According to Informant A1, four areas remain a source of contention between the two countries: D400 in Kandaei, Gunung Rayo in Raso, Gunung Jagoi in Stass, and Batu Aum in Padang Pan. These geographical regions are in proximity to the borders of Malaysia and Indonesia. The issue became more complicated as both governments contested the accuracy of previous surveys that purportedly delineated these areas as part of neighboring countries' respective territories. As a result, extensive discussions between the two governments took place; however, a final resolution remains elusive to this day. Remarkably, as informed by informant A1, these deliberations have yet to disrupt the normal course of daily life in the border community. The persistence of normalcy in the midst of this diplomatic impasse demonstrates the tenacity of local residents in navigating the complexities of a border region marked with political uncertainty. However, these issues of territorial disputes and unresolved lines must be approached cautiously by both countries to avoid any unwanted incidents.

Limitation on Military Authority

The final dilemma is Malaysia's military authority, which lacks the authority to conduct arrests, searches, and seizures. The standard procedure entails that when military personnel come across instances of illegal entry, they must transport the apprehended individuals to the nearest police station for further action to be taken by the police. Consequently, only the police have the authority to detain people and conduct searches on suspects. This regulatory framework raises important implications. Consider the situation in which the military has the authority to directly detain offenders. Such an expansion of power may result in more effective border surveillance. The ability of military personnel to apprehend and conduct preliminary inspections immediately could speed up response times and reduce delays caused by involving the police as an intermediary step, as outlined by informant A2. As a result of the increased risk of arrest, potential cross-border criminals may be deterred from engaging in illegal activities. A similar shift could improve coordination between military and police forces, fostering a more cohesive approach to border security. Nonetheless, due to potential challenges and ensuring clear delineation of responsibilities between both, the implementation of this change should be approached with caution. It is critical to strike the right balance between granting authority for efficient border control and protecting civil liberties.

Strategic Approaches for Ensuring Border Security

The series of dilemmas confronting border security forces has catalyzed the Sarawak state government's active involvement in addressing border control issues. The findings of the study highlight a collaborative effort between Sarawak and the central government that encompasses a comprehensive approach to border control management. This approach encompasses both operational execution and policy formulation, addressing the full range of challenges along the Sarawak-Kalimantan border in a strategic manner. The central government's oversight of various security agencies, administered by the GOF and supported by the MAF, Immigration Department, and Customs Department, is central to this effort. These agencies have played pivotal roles within their respective operational domains, fostering effective collaboration. Furthermore, the findings of the study demonstrate the state government's multifaceted contributions. The first role entails the successful implementation of projects, such as the construction of a temporary control post, which is traditionally the responsibility of the central government. The state government's second role entails actively providing logistics and assets to security agencies, thereby fortifying border security efforts. The state government's evolving role demonstrates its increased involvement in matters of land border security control. It demonstrates a proactive commitment that not only supplements the central government's initiatives but also reinforces the collective determination to protect the integrity of the Sarawak-Kalimantan border.

Nonetheless, despite the sincere efforts made within the internal dynamics of state and central governments, there is a doubt that these efforts are insufficient to effectively address the multifaceted challenges and imminent threats that go beyond mere security concerns. As a result, it is becoming increasingly clear that collaboration with neighbouring countries, particularly the symbiotic relationship between Sarawak and the province of Kalimantan, is critical as affirm by informant A3 and A5. This collaborative synergy not only supplements the smooth implementation of border control and security measures, but it also encompasses a broader range of concerns. The study emphasizes Sarawak's steadfast commitment to playing two roles. Internally, it works with the central government to maintain border security, going beyond traditional security and into the realms of political,

economic, and socio-cultural dimensions that are important to the Malaysia-Indonesia relationship. Simultaneously, on the external front, Sarawak demonstrates its commitment to strengthening ties with West Kalimantan. This approach aims to capitalize on these cordial relations for cross-border collaboration, regional development, and border security (Ruhanas, 2009). Initiatives such as Sosek-Malindo serve as model platforms in this region (Anuar & Raharjo, 2022). This platform, which are primarily concerned with improving their members' economic prospects, also recognize the critical role of security as a foundational pillar underpinning regional economic prosperity. In essence, the effort to improve border security goes beyond mere national concerns, becoming a catalyst for regional development and long-term bilateral partnerships.

3. Conclusion

The variety of dilemmas confronting border security agencies has contributed significantly to the rise in cross-border crime activities. Despite significant government efforts, securing the necessary funds to address deficiencies in personnel, vehicles, and advanced equipment remains a major challenge. Nevertheless, the GOF and MAF's persistent operations have played pivotal role in deterring arbitrary border issues. This effort is complemented by collaboration with the state government, which significantly strengthens the central government's mission to ensure prosperity along the border. However, the importance of constant vigilance remains unchanged. Hence, the development of bilateral relations with Indonesia has emerged as a strategic priority. This proactive approach not only promotes enhanced cooperation but also allows for more effective communication during moments of crisis. By taking such a proactive approach, the task of addressing potential challenges and ensuring continuous security for our border region becomes attainable.

Acknowledgment

Acknowledgements: This article is part of a Ph.D. research project supported by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education's Bumiputera Academic Training Scheme (SLAB) scholarship and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

Funding: The authors wish to express their sincere gratitude to the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) for their endless support in conducting this study.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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