

The Lack of Monitoring Facilities at The Sarawak-Kalimantan Border: The Impact On Inefficient Border Control (Case Study of The Immigration, Customs, Quarantine & Security Complex -ICQS Biawak)

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ABSTRACT:- Facilities are a crucial factor in determining whether a management system can be carried out smoothly or not. When this factor is not handled well, it can lead to inefficiencies in control and preparedness. This study was conducted to analyze the problems causing inefficiencies at border entry points. The study area focused on the Immigration, Customs, Quarantine & Security Complex - ICQS Biawak. The concept of border security was used to explain the importance of maintaining border security for a country's sovereignty. This study employed a qualitative method with primary data obtained from two main sources: interviews and field studies. Secondary data was obtained from literature reviews. The study findings revealed that the lack of facilities had an impact on aspects of control and border maintenance because authorities need to conduct more monitoring. However, there were also limitations due to the limited number of personnel stationed in the study area, which also posed a significant challenge to authorities in conducting monitoring as the coverage area was quite extensive.

Keywords: Border Security Facilities, ICQS, Border Control, Border Security, Sarawak.

I. INTRODUCTION

Biawak Town is located 70.6 kilometers from the capital of Sarawak, Kuching. Biawak is a small town or area that does not have any specific attractions as it is surrounded by oil palm, gambier, and other rural plantations. There is a residential area of around 200 houses. In 2008, the Sarawak Immigration, Customs and Quarantine Complex (ICQS) Biawak was opened at a cost of RM 15 million. It serves as the entry and exit point between Biawak and Aruk, Sambas and Pontianak (West Kalimantan). The main road connecting Lundu - Sematan and Biawak Town has been built for a length of 17.8 kilometers to facilitate vehicle crossings between the two countries. Paved road projects have also been completed along the roads leading to the ICQS Biawak, benefiting the surrounding communities such as Kampung Biawak, Kampung Pasir Hulu, Kampung Jantan, Kampung Jangkar, Kampung Tanjam, Kampung Opek, Kampung Sedaing, Kampung Kendaie, Kampung Pasir Hilir and Kampung Rukam.



Map 1.1: Location of ICQS Biawak
Source: Google Earth (2023)



Diagram 1.2: Demographic Conditions Along the Journey to ICQS Biawak, Lundu

Diagram 1.2 refers to the demographic conditions along the journey to ICQS Biawak. The area here is covered with secondary forests and also plantations such as oil palm, black pepper, and banana. The economy of Sarawak's people in this area revolves around agriculture. However, looking at the weather conditions and topography, agricultural activities here are not very active. Firstly, this is due to the vast area and its distance from the city, approximately 110 kilometers to Kuching or about a 2-hour and 15-minute drive by car. In addition, there is no direct or indirect attraction for economic cooperation between the two countries, namely Malaysia and Indonesia.

Before the establishment of the Immigration, Customs, Quarantine & Security Complex (ICQS) at this border, this town was always busy with cross-border trade activities between the local residents here and their neighbors. It was found that many subsidized goods were taken out of Malaysia to be sold in neighboring countries. This has led to losses in terms of subsidized goods provided to Malaysian citizens. According to an informant interviewed, several types of daily necessities are frequently smuggled, namely sugar, rice, cooking oil, and flour. Additionally, several smuggling routes have been identified and are often used to transport goods across the border to neighboring countries, such as the road in Kampung Kendaie, where this road can be used by motorbikes, cars, and pedestrians alike. There are also villagers who state that there are Indonesian citizens

entering this state through these smuggling routes without valid passports and identification. Among them, some work on local farms while others act as intermediaries for bringing goods into Indonesia.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach where some of the data is collected through secondary sources obtained from library research. Meanwhile, primary data is gathered through face-to-face interviews with 10 informants. They consist of officials serving at ICQS Biawak, Royal Malaysia Police (Research Division), village residents, and academics. The selection criteria for informants are based on their direct involvement and residency in the study area. The interview process and planning were conducted meticulously to ensure the proposed respondents for the interviews were obtained. As the respondents hold key positions within their respective departments, the interview process was conducted orderly according to established procedures. The use of recording tapes during the interview sessions is crucial as it allows the researcher to replay and facilitate the process of writing down the obtained information.

In addition to the interview method, field research was conducted. The field study took place from September 30th to October 7th, 2023, around ICQS Biawak, Lundu. Three sets of questions were prepared for the interviews based on the main objectives of this study. The technique of taking photographs was used to provide evidence related to the conducted research and to support the use of photography as a source and reference material. This is because images and pictures taken can provide a true depiction of the field study site. Taking notes from field observations is another method used in the collection of qualitative data where not only observations are made but data is also written down for analysis.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study has utilized the concept of border security. Borders and frontiers have long been sites of securitization. As contemporary borders have become increasingly unstable and permeable, the function of border security has shifted from the territorial boundaries of states to spaces beyond geopolitical border lines and into societies (Squire, 2011). Scholars have assessed issues such as border authorities, incursions, smuggling (Pratt, 2009), the evolution of cross-border policing over time (Nevins, 2010), new border security technologies (Smith, 2013), migration control through citizenship regimes and deportations (Aas, 2011). Although modern borders have been delineated to express the power of nation-states (Donnan & Wilson, 1999), state power is now exercised by delegating sovereign practices to domestic, transnational, and private actors outside the state and far from traditional state actors (Guiraudon & Lahav, 2000). Emerging actors and sectors have been mandated with security responsibilities and engaged in new policies in the name of security, while traditional security actors operate with new methods and justifications such as police forces, intelligence agencies, private security actors, technology companies, banks, and airlines - among others - collecting, exchanging, and analyzing data, making decisions regarding travel and mobility, and understanding their roles as border security managers (Doty, 2007). In some countries, local police forces are increasingly assuming roles in immigration policing (Coleman, 2009). Limited yet growing research bodies have also begun to explore combinations of indirect control and direct surveillance of border security, adapting neoliberal logic (Andrijasevic and Walters, 2010; Côté-Boucher, 2010). Such combinations may promote the commercialization of border security (Doty and Wheatley, 2013), transferring security responsibilities to profit-seeking entities, and blurring the lines between private and public engagement in security (Berndtsson and Stern, 2011). These deviations in strategy also introduce cost-effectiveness and market logic into border security, positioning private actors as overseers (Lahav, 2008; Walters, 2008). In summary, whether public or private security officials, police officers, immigration bureaucrats, NGO workers, military and border guards, customs officials, drug enforcement teams, or even diplomats, these actors are involved in rapidly evolving border security fields characterized by their own standards, specific regulations, and political interests.

As a diverse set of legal, expert, and technical responses to complex political and economic issues that threaten to hinder or illicitly benefit from global circulation of people and commodities (such as violence, drug trafficking, migrant smuggling), these actors present different, sometimes conflicting, responses to the issues raised by border security. These responses are unified under the label of 'border security'. Treating security as a multifaceted practice that maintains complex relationships with security discourse, legislation, and policy adds layers of complexity to our understanding of contemporary borders (Infantino, 2013, 2014b).



Diagram 1.3: Immigration, Customs, Quarantine & Security Complex - ICQS Biawak Source: Field study at the Complex on October 2, 2023

Diagram 1.3 illustrates ICQS Biawak, where the complex is led by a senior officer from the Malaysian Immigration Department. Upon casual observation, this area appears less bustling compared to regions like Rantau Panjang, Kelantan, and Padang Besar, Perlis. However, according to TPPK Muhammad Shairazi, this area will attract Indonesian citizens crossing into Sarawak, especially during school holidays. Additionally, Indonesians cross into Sarawak for medical services from hospitals around Kuching and to purchase daily necessities. According to Dimas, he comes to Sarawak to purchase retail goods to sell in his country because they are cheaper here compared to his home country.

Sarawak Minister of Transport, Dato Sri Lee Kim Shin, stated that he had previously visited the CIQS in Biawak and emphasized the need to upgrade facilities at the complex (Utusan Borneo, 2023). Issues such as insufficient scanner cameras, inadequate CCTV coverage of personnel are factors contributing to inefficiencies in monitoring this area. Furthermore, newly installed fences only cover a few meters from the main gate and not along the entire border. According to Sarawak Premier Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg, the Aruk National Border Post (PLBN) has been upgraded, but there have been no improvements on the Malaysian side (Sarawak News, 2023). In his view, this situation indicates Indonesia's readiness and preparedness as a preliminary step before relocating its capital to Kalimantan.

Although Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has granted an initial approval of RM1 billion to upgrade infrastructure and capabilities at CIQS on the Sarawak border (Utusan Borneo, 2023), it is still unclear what renovations will be made at ICQS Biawak.



Diagram 1.4 (a): New Fence Installed in Front of the Immigration, Customs, Quarantine & Security Complex - ICQS Biawak



Diagram 1.4 (b): Fence Installed in Front of the Aruk National Border Post (PLBN) Source: Field Study at ICQS Biawak Complex on October 2, 2023

Diagram 1.4 (a) shows the fence that has been installed along ICQS Biawak. Although this anti-climb fence has been constructed along the border, it does not cover the entire border. Only a portion in front of the complex is built, leaving areas covered with dense bushes uncovered. During nighttime, the lack of fence coverage and the dark environment due to the absence of lights also increase the risk of smuggling and border crossings. Diagram 1.4 (b), on the other hand, depicts the road to the entrance of the Aruk National Border Post (PLBN), where the fence is seen to be sturdier and intimidating with the use of barbed wire.

Proposed Improvements

After conducting interviews and field studies at the Immigration, Customs, Quarantine & Security Complex - ICQS Biawak and its surrounding areas, several recommendations for improvement are proposed to enhance security levels in the border area. Firstly, the addition of several CCTV cameras with 360-degree viewing capabilities and spotlights should be installed around the ICQS area and border fences to enhance surveillance. Secondly, stricter screening at entry points is necessary to prevent Malaysian goods (smuggled) from escaping to neighboring countries and to prevent illegal goods (from neighboring countries) from entering. This is because ICQS lacks X-ray machines for screening and vehicle inspections. Thirdly, the upgrade of the ICQS Biawak complex itself appears to be necessary as it currently seems inadequate compared to Indonesia's ICQS complexes, which appear more robust. Fourthly, the federal government and the Sarawak state government need to collaborate to address border issues jointly. This is due to the large and extensive demographics and the budget constraints of the federal government need to be equally shared with the state government so that this issue can be resolved promptly.

Conclusion Immediate steps need to be taken by the Malaysian government in this area as it can improve border security levels in Biawak – Aruk. Additionally, it will reduce the burden of monitoring border security. Furthermore, upgrading security systems such as CCTV and more stable fences will reduce incursions and migrant issues. However, cooperation between the central government and local government is very important because since Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia with extensive coverage, cooperation between the two governments will increase efficiency in improving border security levels.

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Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflicts of interest in publishing this article.

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