

Borders: A Wall of Power and Controversy

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How to cite this paper: Mojlil, F. A. (2024). Borders: A Wall of Power and Controversy. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 14, 329-333.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2024.143020>

Received: February 10, 2024

Accepted: July 5, 2024

Published: July 8, 2024

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Abstract

The essay delves into the multifaceted role of borders in international relations, citing the US-Mexico conflict and the EU's Schengen Agreement as contrasting examples. It explores economic, social, and political implications, acknowledging both positive impacts, like cultural preservation, and negatives, such as tensions and discrimination. Proposed solutions include cultural exchange, cross-border cooperation, and technology use for communication. Additionally, the essay examines how globalization has further complicated the role of borders in international relations by facilitating the flow of goods, services, and people across national boundaries, making it increasingly challenging to regulate and control them. Ultimately, the essay emphasizes the importance of thoughtful policies to balance the drawbacks of borders with the potential for promoting peace and unity.

Keywords

European Union, Schengen Agreement, Cross-Border Cooperation, Cultural Exchange, International Relations, Borders, US-Mexico Conflict

1. Introduction

Borders play an important role in international relations because they indicate the boundaries of territorial sovereignty and distinguish one nation from another. They can be sources of war or peace based on how the countries manage them. Borders also aid in controlling the flow of people, goods, and ideas between countries, which has economic, cultural, and political implications (Weiner, 1985). Borders can also represent symbols of national identity and pride and help determine how nations relate to the rest of the global community (Weiner, 1985). Modern international relations have also been shaped by borders. Increasing globalization and interconnectedness between the worlds have enhanced the significance of borders that govern the movement of individuals, merchandise, and ideas (Weiner, 1985). Border management can be a complex

topic as countries try to weigh security concerns with the need for economic and cultural exchange.

2. US-Mexico Conflict

The issue of how the borders have impacted international relations can be illustrated by one in particular—the ongoing discussions on what is going on with the US-Mexico border. The border is also a sensitive issue, with the United States pushing for tighter immigration policies, such as building a barrier along the border, while Mexico is against these moves (Correa-Cabrera et al., 2014). The border management of the US-Mexico border has largely political, economic, and social implications for both countries; restrictions on trade movement across the border contribute to poverty and underdevelopment in the region (Correa-Cabrera et al., 2014). The issue has also had an impact on the international community, that are worried about human rights violations and how refugees and immigrants are being treated in conflict-hit countries (Correa-Cabrera et al., 2014). Even though the international community has been trying to mediate the dispute, it still lacks resolution, keying into how border issues are complex and sensitive in international relations.

3. Benefits of Borders & the European Union

Nevertheless, a case illustrating how borders can serve international relations is the Schengen Agreement between European nations. The agreement enables passport-free travel across borders in many EU countries and the ability to maintain border security through shared databases and police cooperation (Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2023). The agreement has made the movement of people and goods between countries easier, hence promoting more tourism trade and economic growth (Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2023). The Schengen Agreement eliminates border controls between member nations, allowing for the free movement of people within the Schengen Area, which includes most EU countries (Schengen Area, 2023). While internal borders are abolished, common rules govern external border controls for those entering the area for short stays (Schengen Area, 2023). It has also bolstered European identity and solidarity among the member states. International relations can benefit in several ways from these forms of borders. First, borders are instrumental in defining the domain and sovereignty of a country, which at least minimizes the possibility of disputes and conflicts with neighboring countries (Castles, 2008). Secondly, borders enable the movement of goods and people across countries through the right documentation and regulations. This can foster trade, tourism, and cultural interaction, leading to better relations and diplomacy between countries (Castles, 2008). Ultimately, borders may help to safeguard a country's citizens by controlling the influx of goods and people flowing into the country, enhancing the national security of the country, and preventing the possibility of illness

spreading into the nation (Castles, 2008). In general, borders can sometimes be a point of contention between countries, but they can also serve an important role in encouraging international collaboration and comprehension.

4. Implications of Borders

Borders have positive and negative implications on governments and international relations from an economic view. On the one hand, borders can ease trade and investment by setting definite rules and regulations for cross-border transactions that give rise to economic activity and growth (Starr & Thomas, 2005). Borders can, on the other hand, hinder trade and investment, which can hurt economic growth due to strict policies on the transportation of goods or documentation difficulties. Furthermore, borders can sometimes cause conflicts between countries, particularly in cases where there is a dispute over border territories or immigration policies; this could escalate into diplomatic tensions and strain international relationships (Starr & Thomas, 2005). While open borders can act as economic arteries, facilitating trade, knowledge exchange, and attracting investment, they can also exacerbate existing inequalities and strain resources in receiving regions, necessitating careful management to maximize benefits and mitigate drawbacks (Nijkamp, 2021). Strict border controls, though potentially fostering security and protecting local workforces, can also act as economic walls, hindering trade, limiting market access, and stifling innovation, requiring a nuanced approach to balance these contrasting effects (Nijkamp, 2021). Borders can also have both positive and negative implications from the social and political aspects. On the positive side, borders can preserve cultural identities, national security, and social cohesion by restricting migration and controlling foreign ideas and influences that cross established international boundaries (Starr & Most, 1976). On the negative side, borders may also cause discrimination, xenophobia, and social exclusion by building an artificial separation between people artificially divided up and basing views on stereotypes and prejudices that are reinforced by border divides (Starr & Most, 1976). In the end, borders may symbolize particular political discourses or be used as instruments for attracting allies or avoiding blame to escalate internal and international political tensions and clashes.

5. Possible Solutions

One way to minimize the adverse effects that borders have on international relations is through cultural exchanges and cross-border collaborations. Additionally, fostering an attitude of mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures will minimize discrimination and prejudice (Weiner, 1985). Furthermore, developing economic nodes and investing in the education of poorer regions can help tackle migration at its sources, ultimately leading to no need for tough border controls (Weiner, 1985). In addition, encouraging international dialogue and diplomacy will find a peaceful resolution to conflicts without poli-

ticizing borders (Weiner, 1985). Another solution apart from the above can be to promote technology use for easy flow of communication across borders. These may be tools like video conferencing, online collaboration platforms, or social media. With the help of technology, we break down barriers and connect people beyond borders to share their understanding and collaborate as human beings despite being from various countries or cultures. Alongside cultural exchange and cross-border cooperation, economic development in low-income areas and promoting international dialogue and diplomacy as well as technology can help to do it very effectively for the promotion of peace or unity all over the world.

6. Conclusion

In summary, borders have great significance and correlation with international relations and have affected our modern world in many ways. Yet, borders still have benefited international relations by preventing crime, illicit substances, and diseases through nations. Additionally, borders have numerous economic impacts due to the high cost of borders and social and political effects caused by the tensions caused by either high or low security of those borders. Lastly, although borders can cause numerous problems regarding the international relations of particular nations, several solutions can still help solve this specific issue, such as regional integration and cooperation on the policies of those borders to prevent any disputes or issues between nations.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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