

Editorial

Economists might have to reconsider the political psychology of borders—all those large, muted lines of perception that get embedded and then cartographically re-organized for individuals within groups and masses—the "borders" of Nations, States, LOCs, LACs, fencings, barbed wires, the beautiful and jittery la frontera, the No Man's Land or the deep and sweeping waters across Cuba's proximal islands off the US coastline. In every case the border is interiorised by the psyche following the requirements of group dynamics. Once the border is crossed, however, there is no qualitative distinction of members of hierarchically disposed groups and clusters but only human continuity—the same graphics of power, those same wants and displacements, activity and leisure, labour, survival and deviance. The border only acts as a fear-symbol: to dishonor it is taboo - one is either arrested or shot. On both 'sides' of a geo-political border there is the other intangible border of the rich and the poor, the territorialised and the de-territorialised, the same demography, the same history of the market, the same modalities of comfort and crises, disparities and even absolutely similar principles of economics of supply, sales, money no matter how far technology intervenes through social networks. At the India-Bangladesh "border" at Petrapole-Benapole (in West Bengal), cross-border traffic reifies two nation-states for every passerby. "According to study by RITES, the goods traffic is approximately 400 trucks per day both ways, while the 2006 passenger traffic was about 1,159 people per day (both incoming and outgoing). The total traffic in 2029-30 has been projected as 2,938 trucks per day and the passenger traffic by then will be 3,924 people per day." (The Hindu Business Line, 18th June 2006.) But the basic human condition of people on both sides may only be quantified in the same manner—on the same x-y axes of people and food consumption, people and basic amenities. The Indian-Bengali and Bangladesh citizens do not exist in real life: they only exist on the passport. The "border" is already infiltrated by humanity. The REAL BORDER is invisible but not mathematically undefined because we can easily identify and locate a person's status in the social context by the amount of wealth he/she possesses. Thus we have a simple classification of human beings according to their earnings per capita or the amount of credit in terms of a reigning international currency, for instance. People's nationalities are defined by the per capita Nations to which they belong. There is only one hierarchical economics for the entire global village – hence also globalization is at best an imputed and strategic name of the markets generated by conveyor line production systems.

The human precept of the "border" is therefore both constricting and hypostasized. Demographical or territorial borders obscure the true site of borders where the line or arc is no more than a soluble entity constantly in need of shape –it is a protean outline that is altering with every impulse in the group-domain. Consider for example – the REAL BORDER that lies through South Asia. It is an ethological and transversal border that runs from Forth Worth Texas (where General Dynamics makes 2 billion dollar profits annually from the sale of its fighter aircrafts to Pakistan and other Middle East countries) or the post-Soviet Central Asian republics who produce weapons grade Uranium, through (on the opposite side)—insurgent groups and seditionists/guerillas in the dense interior forests of Central India who buy such arms and ammunition from an international market. This side of

the REAL BORDER conflicts with the other “established” and cartographic economics of “licensed” industries and armies, civilian (police) society, the self-deceiving democratic and “nationalistic” society of parliament and government administration. The border constantly recedes and advances as the “terrorists” make an advance – or, on the contrary, as the GDP of establishment economy contributes increasingly to defence spending and infrastructural consolidation. Historically it would appear that every society, every empire –even every innocent nation has its birth in some kind of justifiable (or otherwise) violence and aggression – although no developing or planned society post-partum is violent since it keeps building its maximum stability by increasing production and securing the post-survival desires of commodity. Any stable economics is not violent unless it gets to create coercive pressures of simple consumerist demands by exploiting another section of its own body-politic: human labour is here the best kind of service provider. The picture might have been different were we to successfully design machines that could perform intricate tasks of engineering, agricultural decision making, etc. to name a few. But the stratified nature of human economy is something more fundamental- it is a psychological fact from which we cannot escape. Perhaps there is a certain set of explanations that could show how divisions are generated and aggravated in social situations and consequently how, by being based on the same pre-derivative principles society functions like a limbic extension or organ of a gargantuan mother nature. More locally there is the unavoidable reality of what we might term “competence level” – an unmerciful and ruthless provocation for human action. There are two components of competent actions (i) somatic or physical drive and (ii) the set of skill-related competences which depend again on (a) natural, genetic inclination or inclination by-birth and (b) honing or practical engagement with a view to acquisition of desired objectives, either of survival or pleasure. In short we could classify competences like agricultural activity as requiring more of physical competence and on the other hand ‘designing’ as more of skill-related activity. Second there are the ‘mental’ factors; these are something like curiosity-killers. I do not know if physiologists or behaviorists could offer some kind of theory for the evidently powerful phenomenon of curiosity which seems to me to determine the more complicated ‘possessive’ instincts – the love of excessive wealth, the love of gold, or artistic and precious or rare objects, rare metals, luxury items, creature comforts. Human activity neither ends nor is limited by any notion of mere ‘usage’ or utility: it is far more complex than that. Both (i) a primeval curiosity and (ii) a tendency to play games leads to formation of industry, even on an unimaginably large scale. More man hours are devoted to the production of gaming objects. We are curious, gamish pleasure-seekers of such fantasy where even technology is used for stimulus and entertainment.

I venture in this context to introduce another neologism in human situations: that is of aggrandizement. It is a strange and incontrovertible fact perhaps that every human being-as an individual seeks to aggrandize, “to make larger”, or “increase” –which is a good thing. We should consider the wonderful history of the word “aggrandize” and especially how it replaced the Romanic “magnum” – which included the sense of being “great” but also that of “imposing” that greatness for one-self. Consider the Spanish synonyms of that word: *augmentar*, *engrandecer*, *agrandar*; *expandir*, *expander*: words which have driven Columbus and Magellan and the Armada across the Atlantic. It is like a word which Nietzsche might have subscribed to. Self-aggrandizement in its most rudimentary level is just self-preservation. Every person has a right to preserve and live –since it is a natural fact; but then this instinct to preserve wonderfully drives us to consolidate our gains and achievements – to the extent that it creates a modicum of essentially coercive demand or submission of

another individual. Here aggrandizement becomes a powerful mechanism in the hands of the perpetrator creating standards of demand and conformity, and ultimately leading to unstable situations of conflict. Without aggrandizement of the individual's efforts food, shelter and all basic needs of habitat cannot be secured – first for the self, then the family, then the socius, then a broader more fainter form of a larger incomprehensible socius which we cannot visualize by a single act of cognition. There is no border line again to that sense of security of possessions. Modern society tends to stabilize aggrandizement by application of ceilings and laws but they are ironically meant to be broken. There could be no “theory” of economic reality unless the cognitive mechanisms of survival needs are fully known, and they may not be known at all.

Tirtha Prasad Mukhopadhyay
Editor-in-Chief