



Securitisation of the Nepal–India Border: Discourse, Practices, and Everyday Lives of the Borderland Madhesi Population

Presenter



Mahesh Kushwaha

PhD researcher, School of Law
and Government, Dublin City
University (DCU), Ireland

Physical presence : SIAS Meeting Hall
Virtual presence : <https://bit.ly/fhrss16>
Date: 30th July 2026 (Thursday)
Time: 3:00 to 5:00 p.m (NPT)

About Future Himalayan Research Seminars

Future Himalayan Research Seminar Series on Environment and Development is a research sharing platform to present recent and ongoing studies where researchers can meaningfully engage with each other and share knowledge. Not limiting itself to presentation and feedback loop, the seminar is also a platform for researcher to build social and intellectual relationship with contemporaries and experts from diverse array of research tradition within the overarching theme. The research seminar series is a bi-monthly event with open access to everyone interested.

This seminar is a 2-hour interactive session held at the SIAS premises on 30th July, Thursday. Mr. Kushwaha will open with a 20–30-minute presentation outlining his ongoing doctoral research design, theoretical framework, and initial findings. This will be followed by an open focus-group-style discussion.

Seminar Overview

Security, cultural, and economic anxieties have led countries worldwide to regulate, secure, and securitize their international borders. Scholars have studied it primarily from global north and state-centric lenses, often citing the phenomenon as states' exercise of sovereignty over their territory and people. These explorations have highlighted how states' identity formation, approaches to immigration, and geopolitical calculations drive their efforts to securitize borders, not just in speeches but also in practice through legal reforms, bureaucratic changes, and technological applications. While identity, nationalism, and citizenship often feature as important factors influencing border securitization, little attention has been paid to how borderland communities' sense of identity, belonging, and everyday lives explain border securitisation. To address these gaps, this ongoing study investigates the securitisation of the Nepal-India border, by placing the borderland Madhesi community at the centre of its exploration. The central question guiding this study is: To what extent do discursive acts, border practices, and lived experiences of the borderland Madhesi community collectively constitute the gradual securitisation of the Nepal-India border?

To address this question, the research employs an expanded theory of securitisation and a multi-method qualitative case study design, including a critical discourse analysis (CDA), ethnographic fieldwork, and semi-structured key informant interviews. Drawing from the primary data and from the literature on border, identity, nationalism, and citizenship, the research aims to conclude that securitising discourses, legal and bureaucratic border practices, and the borderland Madhesi communities' experiences at the border collectively illustrate a gradual securitisation of the Nepal-India border, which has remained open historically. This study decentres both the state and the global north from the analysis of borders and their securitization and offer an alternative framework of analysis—a useful theoretical contribution to the expanding literature.

This seminar will feature an interactive presentation by Mahesh Kushwaha, sharing the foundational research design, theoretical framework, and literature review of his ongoing doctoral research at Dublin City University. As this research is in its development phase—with primary fieldwork planned for next year—the session is designed to function as a collaborative focus group discussion rather than a conventional lecture. Mahesh will map out the conceptual landscape of the securitization of the Nepal-India border, aiming to collectively identify and refine key themes to explore during his upcoming fieldwork. In particular, the discussion will delve into the lived realities of the borderland Madhesi communities, exploring the specific issues and everyday dynamics that shape their sense of identity, belonging, and security. Attendees are warmly invited to share their insights, feedback, and comments on Nepal's shifting security landscape, border governance, and geopolitical anxieties to help enrich and guide the empirical direction of this study.

Presenters Profile

Mahesh Kushwaha is a PhD researcher at the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University (DCU), Ireland, and is currently a visiting fellow at the Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) under the EU-funded FEMENA project. He is an Erasmus Mundus Scholar who holds an International Joint Master's in Security, Intelligence & Strategic Studies and a BA in International Studies from Soka University of America. Previously, Mahesh worked as a Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Innovation and Foreign Policy (CESIF), where he led research projects on Chinese infrastructure engagement and AI governance in Nepal. His doctoral research investigates the securitization of the Nepal-India border and its implications for the identity, citizenship, and nationalism of the borderland Madhesi community.

Organized by:



Follow Us:



SIAS is a Kathmandu-based research institute involved in Nepal and in South Asia in several social science and environmental issues. Its research utilizes recent knowledge in Nepal and globally to understand, unravel and interpret unfolding social, political, economic and environmental dynamics. SIAS also promotes critical dialogues on research, policy and practice interface.