Making and Unmaking of State Boundaries: Ethnographic Evidence from a Bangladesh Border Village

Md. Mojahar Rahman Shah[1]
Md Faruk Shah[2]

Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic data from a Bangladeshi border village of Rajshahi, this article examines how the state creates a border as a distinct political territory and how border residents unmake boundaries via their daily activities and transborder mobility. In addition, it examines the perceptions of residents towards the state's government, border force agencies, and administration based on their everyday border experiences. Since this is an anthropological research, narratives were collected via ethnographic interviews, and the lens of narrative was used to analyse the data. This article finds that a state establishes its borders through a combination of strategies, incidents, ideas, fear, panic, and constant monitoring. Border residents, on the other hand, 'unmake' the border by crossing it with certain strategies, using particular methods to boost trade and maintain social mobility. People who live near the border have a pessimistic opinion of the government, border policy, and border administration; they perceive that the border is a failed issue. The findings of this research will be beneficial not only as an academic addition to the field of border studies but also as a means for policymakers along the Bangladesh-India border to assess concerns and enhance policy implementation.

Keywords: State territory, Making borders, Unmaking borders, Border encounters, Border studies

[1] Museologist, Department of Ethnography & Decorative Art, Bangladesh National Museum.
Email: mrs1plabon@gmail.com
[2] Associate Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka.
Email: faruk@du.ac.bd

1. Introduction

The 1947 partition gave rise to Bangladesh's 4,142 km border with India; and after Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, this line became the two countries' shared boundary. Due to burned terrain, frequent landslides, socio-cultural and economic considerations, border delineation is challenging along this border with plain topography, hills, rainforest, and riverfront sections like the Padma. This often leads to bilateral friction, transborder trade, product movement, and trafficking (Hossain & Islam, 2020). In the contemporary world, a boundary is a peripheral, and a sovereign state emphasizes its boundary to maintain control over the entire territory. As a result of the global fight against terrorism, governments have also increased border security (Jones, 2009).

However, regarding the transborder conflict, instability, and state border control efforts, the border region between India and Bangladesh is regarded as the most marginalized region on earth, comparable to the margin by which the two countries gained independence from the British colonial rule (Schendel, 2005). People on both sides of the border experienced a new identity crisis in the years following the partition (Chowdhury, 2014). They also needed to learn border coping skills (Schendel, 2005). The line is permeable and difficult to maintain because of the historical, cultural, social, linguistic, and ethnic ties between the communities; as a result, cross-border networks and activities persist (Bhattacharjee, 2019). Both states tried to stop it, but a separate border economy emerged (Schendel & Abraham, 2005). However, although there have been many border-related concerns, it is a relatively new phenomenon in South Asian studies (Banerjee, 2011). There are few studies on the issues, crises and conundrums facing border inhabitants from an anthropological perspective. Those who have performed studies have concentrated mostly on the management of state boundaries. However, these studies do not take into account local people's needs, wants, or realities (Pladan, 2013).

In the 1950s and 1960s, anthropologists theorized that people who lived close to the border were culturally isolated and stagnant because the border was a fixed line that separated and defined the region of culture. Anthropologists are presently concentrating on the historical connections through which people engage at the individual and family levels and build an economic network across borders as a socio-cultural process (Alvarez, 1995). In light of this, the current research has focused on people's accounts of how a state determines its borders on a daily basis. In addition, it examined how the inhabitants of the borderland deconstruct the state boundary via transborder crossings, mobility, product flows, and social mobility. The research also examined how people's daily encounters with borders affected their perspectives on state governments, borders, and administrative forces.

2. Literature Review

There have been very few anthropological studies undertaken on the Bangladesh-India border so far. Schendel (2005) concentrated on the Bengal borderland, where he explored transborder ties, economics, the sociocultural lives of border residents, state boundary regulations, and the movement of goods. He utilized images that showed the Bengal border life of seventy years before to illustrate the voices and experiences of the border landers. The stories inform us that borders are disputed and mutable areas for both the state and the inhabitants. This article indicates that the border's social, cultural, economic, historic, and natural aspects have a variety of landscapes. Similarly, Banerjee and Chen (2013) focused largely on an 'agency-structure' viewpoint while researching the boundaries between Bangladesh-India and China-India. Borders act as hurdles for those who reside in less developed areas. The boundary differentiates a location and gives border inhabitants a unique experience. The study also explored the relationships and exchanges between borderland residents who live along two boundaries between Bangladesh and India and China that were established under British colonial rule and subsequently changed as a result of that legacy. Although the research examined how the border's structure and the person impact and shape one another, it does not address how an individual remakes the border via daily actions.

Shewly (2013) conducted ethnography to explore the vulnerable life experiences of enclave dwellers on the India-Bangladesh border using the Giorgio Agamben concept of "state of exception." The lives of the enclave residents are not protected by legal rights but are subject to the law and socio-political exploitation. The author used Agamben's other term, "bare life," to conceptualise the abandoned zone of the enclave. On the contrary, Cons (2013) argues that understanding populations on the margins of South Asia and beyond requires a focus on how they construct themselves as moral communities. The paper also focused on how the politics of the India-Bangladesh border shape and are shaped by a variety of fractures and internal boundaries within the enclave.

Piliavsky (2013) argues that national borders are relational rather than substantive objects that generate various types of relationships within and between communities. The effect of borders is not limited to the borders of national states but extends across their territories. Borders do not provoke their crossing but rather serve as boundaries that enclose and divide communities. Similarly, Saha (2007) explored the connection between the cultural and political identities of India and Bangladesh. He focused on how the state has

used the micro-differences of ethnic and cultural identities. The multifaceted relationship, with the complicated meanings of redefinition, understandings, and global power politics, takes them to new meanings.

Pladan (2013) focused on the border economy and the history of division. The border between Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan is increasingly significant in relation to the globalized economic system. Even though there has been a great deal of turbulence, people maintain transborder reciprocal relation, communication, and collaboration. Individuals who have experienced partition would never be able to forget the agony it caused them. Contrary to popular belief, borders may alter as a result of conflicts, the formation of new nations, and the division of a territory into two or more parties. The author focused on history and the border economy but did not explore the reasons why people continue to cross state borders for commerce, travel, and other activities.

Radu (2010) contends that 'space' is neither the sole distinguishable feature of the border, nor is it a place of residence; rather, the border must be understood as a space of 'becoming.' He illustrates the logic of seeing the border as a 'becoming' region by addressing a variety of contentious problems. Moreover, a boundary is a decentralized, dynamic, and highly transformable area. Cunningham and Heyman (2004), similarly, claimed that a border is a critical place that influences political identity, social stratification, and gender. In recent years, informal economics, transborder enterprise, and cross-border smuggling have gained prominence in the globalized economy. Boundary and transborder migration are linked to intricate political and cultural processes.

Most of these studies have concentrated on the state's perspective in establishing and maintaining the boundary. However, the narratives of the people and how they describe the daily creation of state borders and their everyday border experiences have been ignored. Thus, there is still a research void in this area of study as it primarily considers historical and economic issues. In light of this, this article explores the key processes of border formation and analyses the socio-economic and cultural actions, perceptions, and discourses of individuals to determine how and why they unmake the boundary.

3. Research Objectives

This article aims to understand how states make borders and how individuals unmake them. Specific objectives are:

- To describe the mechanisms through which states treat the border as a distinctive political territory.

- To explain how border landers unmake the state border through daily transborder crossing, product flow and social mobility.

- To examine how individuals see the state's government, border, and administrative forces based on their everyday experiences at the border.

4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the research was developed with the help of 'ethnography of the state' and 'anthropology of the margins' in order to comprehend the daily construction of the state border by the state and the unmaking of the state border by the people (Das & Poole, 2004). The ethnography of the state denaturalizes liberal expectations of the state's form and content by analyzing the state's actual operations, representations, and meanings through the prism of people's experiences and practices rather than committing to any specific normative judgement of what the state is or should be (Ranta, 2022). Anthropology in the margins of the state refers to doing an anthropological analysis of marginal practices, spaces, and languages that are necessary to a thorough understanding of the state (Stevenson, 2007). In anthropology, ethnography of the state entails investigating how the nation-state relates to its boundaries via distinct practices and languages (Das & Poole, 2004). In this sense, the analytical and descriptive technique for doing ethnography of the state requires anthropologists to maintain a distance from the effect of state authority and to keep in mind that state power weakens towards the margins. At the same time, the politics and practices of the margins determine the policies and practices of the state and the state itself (Das & Poole, 2004). The border is thus a marginal space in terms of its historical, physical, political, and economic attributes. The anthropology of the margins views the life of the margins as distinct from barbarism and instead focuses on how diverse practices and their lives may contribute to the existence of the state. Similarly, as numerous exceptions occur on the periphery, the state obtains its basic element to govern over the people. The idea of a 'state of exceptions' (Agamben, 2005) was used to describe how everyday exceptions, such as breaking fundamental rules and standards, arise at the border since it is a site where numerous exceptions exist.

The concept of a state is primarily defined by authority over its centre and territory. However, the state's law and order has yet to be established and frequently unmakes in the margins. Talal Asad's 'margins of the state' were used to conceptualize the margins, their traits, and state governance over them (Asad, 2004). According to Asad (2004), there are three markers that designate

the state's margins. Firstly, the margins consist of individuals who belong to nature and cannot socialize in accordance with state laws and regulations. As the state is yet to be established in the margins then an ethnographer should emphasize how the state uses specialized technical power to educate and coerce the marginalized into law-abiding subjects. Secondly, margins are linked to legibility and illegibility. In order to govern its subjects, population, territory, and lifestyles, a modern state has been constructed through compiling and storing records and documents. A contemporary state is a kind of institution that engages in illegibility through a variety of actions, documents, and languages. Thirdly, the margin is the intersection of the body, laws, and disciplines (Asad, 2004). The state wields sovereign power not only over territory but also over people's bodies, a concept known as bio-power (Foucault, 2009).

5. Research Methodology

The inhabitants of Bangladesh's borderlands with India are much more closed off and culturally distinct than the rest of the population. They view outsiders with suspicion and don't want to discuss boundaries or partition with among them or others. This research was carried out as an anthropological study in this sense. An ethnographer relies on local cultural perspectives to evaluate local behavior and explain its cultural significance. Ethnography also focuses on predictable, daily patterns of human cognition and behavior. One of the most important aspects of ethnographic research is that the researcher must approach a culture with an open mind (Fetterman, 2010). Keeping these points in mind, an ethnographic field study was conducted in Tathipara (Pseudonym) village which is located in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. An estimated 3398 people live in the village which is traversed by the Padma River.

The research relies on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through observations and 30 ethnographic interviews (EI). All EIs were carried out in the narrator's normal setting, allowing the narrator to stay as usual. The sources of secondary data include books, journals, the internet, and relevant articles and newspapers. Everyday border experiences differ from individual to individual. In that context, EIs were more appropriate than a formal questionnaire-based interview. In EIs, the ethnographer had an open mind to learn about autobiography, border experiences, and life crises. Data were organized thematically and presented using narrative analysis. Consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of the respondents were also ensured.

6. Findings

The research revealed the primary indicators of how the state in Tathipara

establish borders as a distinctive region on the one hand, and how individuals unmake these borders via transborder, commodity and social mobility on the other. Moreover, this part has offered the border dwellers perceptions about the state's governing body, border patrol, and administrative forces based on their daily interactions with the state's government, border patrol, and administrative forces.

6.1 Making of Borders

Both states have some unique strategies to make the border area as a special political zone. Border patrol agents are usually responsible for instances including villager murders, disappearances, beatings, and detentions. Abdul Gani, a 51-year-old weaver, said, *"A guy from Tathipara was crossing the border with a cow two months ago. The guy was taken by the BSF, who brutally assaulted him."* The whole border region and the people who reside in the region are patrolled and surveillanced by the BGB. Moreover, there are border outposts, roadblocks, speedboats, automobiles, lofty watchtowers, moving lights, and high-resolution CC cameras that are all used for governmental surveillance. A shopkeeper named Ashik (38), said that *"On the Indian border, a few moving lights are visible. These lights spin around in the pitch-black night. The light is bright and visible from a great distance. The BSF monitors the border from the camp using these moving CC cameras."*

To preserve the region's political specialty, both governments implement a number of unique regulations along the border. The BGB periodically declares a state of emergency in Tathipara. Weaver Afaz Mondol (70) remarked, *"The BGB sets a curfew. Whose curfew? No one is permitted to go to the river's bank during a curfew, and the BGB will beat anybody discovered there if the border situation becomes tensed."* States may also propagate the terrorist narrative. The owner of a grocery store, Imran Ali, age 65, said, *"A terrorist gang would cross the border into India and then into Bangladesh, therefore the BGB and BSF have been strictened to ensure the border's security. The Indian government was not aware of how much border control was required, and there were several terrorist attacks in India in the past. We learnt about this via newspapers and media, and the government also asserts that there are terrorists in our country."* If there is any social unrest in the village, the BGB members go there and intervene to bring it under control. Afaz Mondol, a weaver by trade, aged 70, stated, *"When there is unrest in the village, BGB members are often called to suppress it. I once got into a fight with one of my neighbours, and BGB then came over and spoke to us before threatening us and ordering us to stop fighting."* A *Muazzem* of the mosque named Abul Kasem (66), stated, *"Both the BGB and the BSF come and beat us; they punish*

us without cause. No one learns that someone is being abused every day until a fatality occurs."

Afaz Uddin (70), said, *"On the border of India, everyone has an ID card as an Indian border dweller who come to work near border land."* As a result, people from India show their ID cards and come to work in their fields and return in the afternoon. BSF has set up a timeline to work in the char land along the river. Nobody stays at char land after evening; they all have to go back to the village before 5 PM from the field. On the other hand, *"BGB has no such time schedule for Bangladeshi people, but they have to return from the checkpoint before evening,"* said Imran Ali (65). In addition, the border forces, both BGB and BSF members, held flag meetings for various purposes on a regular basis and according to circumstance. Abdul Alim (47), a farmer told, *"A member of our community was apprehended by the BSF around two months ago. BGB and the BSF had a meeting to discuss the matter and later BGB handed the BSF the member."* Moreover, the media in both states report on border-related news. In this sense, both print and electronic media have a role in establishing a boundary. The media provides people with a variety of border-related news. A store owner said, *"We get news from newspapers and television whenever any event occurs along the border. I learned that the West Bengal administration prioritizes border monitoring. I learned from a newspaper about Felani's brutal murder and how she was hung."*

6.2 Unmaking of Borders

Despite the fact that both states attempt to prohibit border crossing, border dwellers employ different methods to cross the border. They cross the border by boat, posing as swimmers and anglers at night, in the rain, and in a location with no checkpoint. Shanto, a farmer aged 45, said, *"At night, there are no checks at any border crossing. Sometimes, when it rains, we pass cows through certain areas. During the rainy season, BSF members usually go to the camp."* Besides, individuals occasionally pay bribes to the border guards in order to cross the border. Shamsuddin Ahmed, a 60-year-old weaver, stated, *"Everyone consumes bribes. If we provide bribes, border guards will settle down."* Furthermore, smugglers are active in the border. They have regular contact with the border guard members. Shariful, a 48-year-old merchant, said, *"Tathipara people sometimes cross the border with the assistance of smugglers and border traders."* A person may go to India with a passport and then return to the country by crossing a border with several goods. In actuality, they do not utilise their passports according to state law, but rather for their personal gain. People often utilise counterfeit Indian identification cards to cross the border and enter the corridor and local market in search of employment or other parts

of the charland. Samajul Islam (42), a farmer, claimed, *"In the past, a border market existed at Tathipara. Numerous Indians arrived here with their cows, sold and went back home."* The people of India come to work in the chars of Bangladesh, while the people of Bangladesh cross the border to work on agricultural land in India. The Padma and its charland are one of Tathipara's most important resources for maintaining transborder movement.

People cross the border to exchange gifts, express sympathy, and exchange happiness. Many people on both sides of the border have consanguine and fictive kin. They maintain communication with and host their relatives. Sometimes they send letters to their kin. Afaz Mondol (70) said,

> I went to work in a farming field in Sagarpara [an Indian village]. While living there, my daughter got married to an Indian. Later, I came back here with my wife but my family and my daughter's family are to frequently cross the border.

Besides, people exchange gifts with their relatives. Shamsuddin (60) said, *"A few months ago, my cousin brought two Punjabis for me from India."* Abul Kashem (47), a farmer, said, *"I had an Indian friend named Gopal who died one month ago. He was a business friend of mine. A few days later, I went to offer condolences to the family."* Most of the families of Tathipara have one or more kin in India. Afaz Mondol (70) said, *"My sisters and nieces are all there. Sometimes I cross the border to see them. My sister's sons come to me whenever they get a chance."* People in India are amicable with their business partners for commercial interests. Imran Ali, aged 65, said, *"There are Bengalis like us in that country. I used to go to their houses and I would wash my hands and face, eat and drink, and go to the market."*

The border of Tathipara is frequented by Indian Sari, Semai, and other equipment and products. Sumon, a 40-year-old autorickshaw driver, stated, *"No one is able to determine which business is occuring. In the past, sugar, oil, salt, and pesticides were very common smuggling goods. However, beginning in 2009, substantial products and machine components began to arrive, followed by Phensidyl."* People no longer pass cows throughout the day. They are to cross at night with their mouths bound shut. Cows are concealed, and at night they are swum over the river and transported by boat to Tathipara. Indian border merchants do not pay money to Indian banks, but rather to private border merchants using hundy. This assists them in exchanging Indian rupees. In this instance, the residents of Tathipara are affiliated with a large number of prominent businesses.

6.3 Border Dwellers' Perceptions and Experiences

Locals referred to those who arrived from India during and after the partition as refugees, although they did not consider themselves refugees. In reality, this type of identity causes several problems in their life. Ali (66) stated,

> People here refer to us as refugees. Who are refugees? We are not refugees. We came here by exchanging land. We have land but are not getting ownership. If a man stands in an election with us, he will not be able to win because locals don't vote for him. Rather, they come to grab our land.

Additionally, borderland residents marry within their own generation. Saiful Islam, a 78-year-old weaver, said, *"Since the beginning of our arrival in this country, we have married our offspring among our own people. As refugees, nobody wants to marry our children."* People think that their lives in the border are very difficult because there are very limited opportunities available. Abdul Alim (47) said, *"I am paralyzed due to an accident. I should have received government assistance. However, I don't obtain these perks."* Moreover, people believe that the government is torturing and provoking them. Abdul Alim (47) stated,

> The government provides us nothing but agony. We are afflicted by the government. I want to go to India for some time. All my relatives are in that country, but I can't go. I'm afraid to go now. It's a lot of trouble in a legal way; I have to get a passport and a visa. Only then may I be allowed to go.

Regarding land ownership, Shariful Islam (59) said, *"Even now, the government says that these lands are none of us. The Hindus who have migrated to India will enjoy this property."* When they get border relax for doing business, they think the government is good. On the contrary, when the border is strict on business and mobility, they think the government is bad. They think that the government has given them an identity of Muslim political affiliation. Imran Ali (65) said, *"I fought in the war of liberation, but I did not get any certificates anywhere. I mean my father, grandfather, or whoever the people from India are living here all are being treated as the supporters of the Muslim party."* Moreover, border dwellers consider border guards as killers. Imran Ali (65) said, *"BSF shot and murdered citizens of our country whenever they had the opportunity. Our representative never mentions in parliament that there are destitute individuals on our border. Should they be provided with role or any opportunity?"* Afaz Mondal (70) stated, *"What can I say about the border? I will be in danger afterwards.*

The border guards will come and arrest us for this information." It is found that the village's inhabitants arrived from India by swapping land with local Hindus. These Hindus eventually moved to India and stayed there. Due to the fact that they did not acquire title of the swapped property, they faced unique challenges.

The transborder business network has been associated with some politicians and businessmen. Imran Ali (65) said, *"People of the border area have given shelter to so many people. We moved in together with many leaders and workers."* They consider their border area different from other border areas. Imran Ali (65) said, *"There is no record of trafficking of women and children till date. We only have a record of Phensidyl in our area."* Transborder business and involvement is different from stealing and robbing. Ashiq (28), a businessman, said, *"I can't steal for money. I got involved in border business in the hope of becoming self-sufficient. I trade Phensidyl at the borders for earning money."* People make various allegations about BGB and BSF in their daily lives. Sharifur Islam (50), a businessman, said, *"Border guards cannot kill smugglers. Only they do that to ordinary people like us."* Jalek (42), an auto driver, said, *"Brother, this world is not as bad as the BSF of India. You see, they just kill Bangladeshi people like birds."* People in Tathipara Border who are mainly involved in the cattle trade say that it is the centre of the state. They run transborder trade with the help of prominent figures, and those figures also depend on them in political crises by crossing the border or taking shelter. Imran Ali (65) said, *"We live in the border area. That is what the border means. All kinds of business are done here."*

7. Discussion

As states do not obtain full establishment in the state's margin (Asad, 2004), in order to create a rigid border state, it is necessary to control time and space in the border to control the people of the borderland (for example, by issuing identity cards and limiting the length of stay in the borderland) (Ferme, 2004). For the Bangladeshis, there have been laws about borderland stay till nightfall, and for the Indians, there is a border identification card. Moreover, both nations have constructed camps, outposts, checkpoints, moving lights, floodlights, and watchtowers which are the means of 'panopticon' (Foucault, 1995). In both states, it is usual to host flag meetings, intervene when there is social upheaval, use force against the people, construct corridors, disseminate notions about terrorism, declare a state of emergency, allow the media to report the news, fabricate events, and conduct surveillance. All these arrangements are control mechanisms for 'governmentality', the way of making the subjects governable (Foucault, 2009). India always views transborder infiltration as a danger to the nation, and the government has bolstered its border fence and surveillance

while planning to build a new border policy and border security measures (Banerjee & Chen, 2013). The states punish, beat, and interfere with the border dwellers' social lives which imply they may be murdered or punished by the state since they are not law-abiding, substandard citizens (Agamben, 1998). In general, the state has ranked, ordered, and normalised border dwellers as threat groups to sovereignty, and thus they must be controlled by the disciplinary power of surveillance (Foucault, 1995).

People have continued unique techniques and a strong desire to eliminate state boundaries via border crossing, the free movement of products, and social mobility. According to Schendel (2005), there are three explanations for transborder movement, such as returning home, invasion, and denial of crossing. People from both states continue to cross the border into char land and other regions in quest of employment and sustain their living. After partition, two states attempted several times to determine a permanent boundary in the char of the Padma, but no particular borderline has yet been created. However, several governmental measures have damaged the social and cultural life of the people (Schendel, 2005). Essentially, border delineation is a procedure that limits and restricts the movement of product and people. Through human mobility, however, the movement of products, people, and ideas continues (Cunningham & Heyman, 2004). Using both legal and informal channels, people have established a multilayered network of money transactions for cross-border commerce. In addition, they change their currencies informally by using local brokers across international borders. In reality, state laws and order must be often formed and undone in state's marginal space (Asad, 2004). Even though both states use different kinds of monitoring, people use many different methods to keep goods moving across borders.

Earlier anthropological studies of borderland indicated that the cultures of the two sides of the border become distinct; the cultural border is defined by the state border; and the people on both sides of the border are stagnant, contactless, and have no kinship (Alvarez, 1995). However, the boundary is not a static zone, but rather a dynamic and transformative space (Radu, 2010). After establishing the boundary at Tathipara, both states have attempted to break ties of kinship. However, the 'illicit' economy of the border was founded by prior consanguine kin, and this economy is now establishing both affinal and fictive kinship, such as new marriages and commercial relationships. As a result, individuals continue transnational social initiatives to retain familial ties. They continue to maintain and create relationships with their consanguine, affinal, and fictive relatives in India, such as through exchanging gifts, happiness, and condolences. They also provide hospitality to relatives who cross the border.

Although international boundaries consider the movement of products via the border to be unlawful, nation states are fighting to block the network and flow of goods through the border (Schendel & Abraham, 2005). Every day, somewhere around the world, a cultural artifact is stolen, illegally excavated, looted, or brought across a border (UNESCO & ICOM, 2021). The residents of Tathipara make a living along the border, which is a distinct kind of globalization compared to their own. In actuality, the state and the people have distinct conceptions of what is lawful and unlawful. Similarly, many participating in cross-border business see their actions as morally and culturally acceptable (Schendel, 2005). They think that the transborder movement of products is permissible but that the trafficking of women and children is criminal. The natures of both states shift based on trade and crossing the border. When there are influxes of products or rising border crossing rates, authorities increase their monitoring and utilize coercive force against them.

Border landers have a distinctive way of thought; they never consider themselves to be on the state's periphery, living a marginal existence. They consider the border as a stage where they are the protagonist (Schendel, 2005). Different viewpoints on the border, border policy, and the state are held by those who reside near the border. Their perspective resulted from their participation in state border demolishing procedures. They believe they are denied access to government benefits and discriminated against due to their border position. As a consequence, they get interested in border-based business. Their socioeconomic existence is intertwined with the practice of unmaking the border; they are related to the people on the other side; and their means of subsistence rely on the movement of various products over the border. When a government erects a barrier to cross a border, a person's socio-economic life becomes stagnant. They are affected by it. The state gives its inhabitants with passports to go to other countries, but borderland residents see passports as problematic. In actuality, they have been crossing the border since the partition; their beliefs recognize no borders. It is a kind of 'social construction of reality' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) where people create and shape the everyday border reality of making and unmaking a state's border through their interactions.

There has been a widespread binary categorization in Bangladeshi politics, namely secularism and fundamentalism. People in the borderlands have been impacted by this ideology, causing them to assume that the government views them as sympathizers of fundamental Islamic groups. As a form of resistance, individuals express an unfavorable opinion against border guard agencies for their forceful actions against individuals. Because the border constitutes a danger to the state, border residents experience more deprivation

and underdevelopment than residents of other regions. Due to the absence of government development programs in the area, the locals are forced to rely on border-related occupations for survival. People also believe that all the ways of making a border are ineffective. Despite the fact that there was not a single weaving family before to separation, many border-landers are weavers by trade. After arriving in a new place, they did not want to abandon their ancestral occupation. They have continued the weaving heritage for the last 75 years.

Since they do not believe in division and state lines, they continue to practice history. After the partition of 1947, the majority of them moved to this region in exchange for land from the Hindu inhabitants of this area. Despite aspirations from several administrations, the Indian-origin villagers who relocated here did not get ownership of the property they swapped for it. As refugees who reside on the borderland, they are politically weaker than the other residents of their region. These individuals endure many pains, yet there is no endeavor to assist them (Schendel, 2005). In the study village, individuals are considered as 'refugees' by the other villager, which is a kind of social stigma; in addition, other villagers do not want to form affinal bonds with them. Consequently, they engage in endogamy among themselves. As they face marginalization from society, they feel themselves to be refugees. The reality of refugees is that they are driven to abandon their homes and countries of origin. Bengalis believe any departure from their homeland to be a terrible affliction, which is a characteristic of their psyche (Chakrabarty, 2011). In reality, they often contest their 'refugee' status since they arrived in this country via land swaps during the partition era.

8. Conclusion

Both Bangladesh and India treat the border as a special political territory by creating incidents, news, maintaining administration, conducting surveillance, declaring a state of emergency, promoting terrorist discourses, conducting corridor management, flag meetings, using coercive force against civilians, social intervention by border guard agencies, constructing infrastructure, issuing border identification cards, establishing working hours, etc. Schendel (2005) claims that states are always engaged in border-making operations in an effort to preserve their territory, and that these efforts serve as a means by which the states may gauge their own success or failure. However, the border dwellers may oppose the establishment of the state border through crossing the border, mobility, the movement of products, and social mobility. They adopt a variety of strategies, such as trudging through land, sailing at night or in the rain, pretending to be fishermen, bribing the authorities, or using the services

of smugglers to get across the border. Some of the ways they are able to stay on the move include making use of fake border identity cards, shopping at cattle markets on both sides of the border, working in fields on both sides of the border, and meeting new people in the char region. They continue the flow of products over the border, which fluctuates between rises and declines. Gift giving, emotional expression, and hospitality all play a role in keeping transnational social ties alive and thriving. Although their borders are secure, both states exploit them. People are striving to hide their everyday borders and partition experiences. They bear a number of burdens, including non-ownership of trade goods, hometown memories, and friendship. These individuals hold unfavourable views of the government, its border policy, and its administrative forces. Through the expression of their own views, individuals dismantle the state barriers such as being denied benefits, being tortured by the government, and having passports be a nuisance. They have an unfavourable perception of the state and border troops. All of these things and feelings about a border that is falling apart show that people who live along the border are always in a state of struggle, conflict, regional conflict, and daily resistance (Schendel, 2005).

Disclaimer: *This article is a revised part of a post-graduate thesis which was submitted by the first author to a public university in Bangladesh.*

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