Temporal changes of bordering practices in the Indo-Bangladesh border

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Abstract

India shares the longest border with Bangladesh. The Indo-Bangladesh border came into existence after India's partition in 1947 which was finally called the Indo-Bangladesh border after 1971. This border is not carefully managed from its existence. Border management mainly started in 1989. The article discusses the emergence of the Indo-Bangladesh border. It describes the measures taken by the government of India for border management such as border fencing, floodlighting, established border outposts, border roads, etc., and also its present status. The Indo-Bangladesh border has been described as the 'problem area of tomorrow' for its cross bordering activities such as illegal immigration, smuggling, trans-border movement of insurgents, etc. The political leaders make different narratives by using these cross bordering practices to further their political agenda.But the actual status of border management and the political narrative is not similar at all the time. This study also discusses the official stand of different political parties.

Keywords

Indo-Bangladesh Border; Border Management; Border Fencing; Political Narratives

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Темпоральные изменения пограничных практик на индо-бангладешской границе

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Аннотация

Индия разделяет свою самую длинную границу с Бангладеш. Индо-Бангладешская граница возникла после раздела Индии в 1947 году, которая после 1971 года была окончательно названа границей между Индией и Бангладеш. С начала своего существования эта граница контролируется не слишком тщательно. Управление границей в основном началось с 1989 г. В статье рассматривается возникновение Индо-Бангладешской границы. В ней описываются меры, принятые правительством Индии для пограничного контроля, такие как ограждение границы, прожекторы, установленные пограничные заставы, пограничные дороги и т. д., а также её нынешний статус. Индо-Бангладешская граница описана как «проблемная зона завтрашнего дня» из-за трансграничной деятельности, такой как нелегальная иммиграция, контрабанда, трансграничное перемещение повстанцев и т. д. Политические лидеры создают разные нарративы, используя эти трансграничные практики для продвижения своей политической повестки дня. Но фактический статус управления границами и политический нарратив не всегда совпадают. В этом исследовании также обсуждается политическая позиция различных партий.

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Introduction

The border is a multifaceted phenomenon. Borders are "multifaceted, multi-level and interdisciplinary institutions and processes transecting spaces in not only administrative and geopolitical but also cultural, economic and social terms" (Donnan & Wilson, 1999; Newman, 2003; Paasi, 2005;Van Houtum, 2011). Borders have constituted a major topic in the tradition of political geography (Newman & Paasi, 1998). Geographer Prescott (1987) defined borders and their related terminology. According to Prescott, "Boundary was the abstract line that separated state territories. In the contemporary world, the border has become increasingly complex and multifaceted (Paasi & Prokkola, 2008) and undocumented migration, terrorism, drug smuggling, etc. are the key phenomena of a border security issue (Ackleson, 2005).

India shares 4096 km (Assam-262 km, Tripura-856 km, Mizoram-318 km, Meghalaya-443 km, West Bengal-2,217 km) long land boundary with Bangladesh (earlier East Pakistan). The Indo- Bangladesh border came into existence after the partition in 1947 (Das, 2008). This time it is the demarcation line between India and the Eastern part of Pakistan. After the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, this boundary became the Indo-Bangladesh boundary. This border is very much known for its cross bordering practices such as illegal immigration, cross-border trade, etc. because of the cultural, ethnic and linguistic similarities with border sharing states of India with Bangladesh. West Bengal is noticeable among them. These cross-bordering practices are treated as the socio-cultural phenomena for the two Bengals. But gradually the border is started to securitize for terrorist attacks, bombings, riots in different parts of the country and its link up with Islamic terrorist organizations of Bangladesh and Pakistan such as Harkat-ul-jihad, Lashkar-e-Taiba etc (Jones, 2009). The discourses started to securitize the political border of Indo-Bangladesh. The government of India takes different measures for militarizing the Indo-Bangladesh border (Jamwal, 2004; Mcduie-ra, 2014). But the political narratives related to the Indo-Bangladesh border create a different perception from the actual happening.

So in this study, the author tries to draw a historical outline of the emergence of the Indo-Bangladesh border and analyze the bordering practices in context of securitization and the Spatio-temporal changes in bordering practices. It also discusses the political stand of different political parties.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows.

- To describe the historical outline of the emergence of the Indo-Bangladesh border.

- To study the emergence of bordering practices in the context of securitization of the Indo-Bangladesh border.

- To analyze the Spatio-temporal development of bordering practices in Indo-Bangladesh border.

- Finally, it tries to analyze the political narratives of different political parties on the Indo-Bangladesh border management or bordering practices.

Theoretical discussion about the border

Border studies is the new discipline of social science that discusses the construction of the border, cross-border activities like migration, trade, etc. cross-border crimes like smuggling, human trafficking, etc., and border management by the government (Konrad & Nicol, 2011). Border studies are an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field in the present day (Kolossov & Scott, 2013). Mainly the discipline extends in the early 1960s (Paasi, 2005). Today border studies is an interdisciplinary field and worked with the other academic disciplines of social science such as geography, international relations, anthropology, political science, sociology, history, and philosophy (Kolossov & Scott, 2013); Haselsberger, 2014). In the 'geographical research' borders are now a prime object in political geography (Paasi, 2005).

In this study, it is tried to analyze the emergence, bordering practices and political narratives related to Indo-Bangladesh border. So, before the discussion, some theoretical concepts and terminologies are discussed here.

The term "border" is often used synonymously with the terms "boundary" and "frontier" (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999; Haselsberger, 2014). According to Popescu (2012), "borders have traditionally served the role of ordering society". It is a barrier of the territory which creates different states or countries. So the definition, classification, communication, and the power of controlling a territory are the main significance of the border (Haselsberger, 2014).

The meaning of the border is different from place to place, time to time, and culture to culture. The 'border', 'boundary', and 'frontier' are used synonymously in different articles but they have a slight difference in meaning (Chang, 2010; Haselsberger, 2014).

Frontier refers to an area which lies ahead of the hinterland of the state (Dwivedi, 2012). According to Ladis Kristof,

> "Frontier is a region or zone having a width as well as length."

It has zonal characteristics and also is a characteristic of rudimentary socio-economic relations marked by rebelliousness, lawlessness, and/or absence of laws (Kristof, 1959). With time the empty zone of frontiers transformed into a populated area and the zone converted into lines. Then the concept of frontier zones changes in the boundary line.

The **boundary** is a line on a map delineating a territorial boundary or the limit of a political jurisdiction. According to Ladis Kristof, "the term boundary denotes a line such as may be defined from point to point in treaty, arbitral award or boundary commission report." It is synonymous with the border. The Boundary line is a socio-political imprint of the human being (Kristof, 1959). A "boundary" is a linear concept, demarcating one particular facet (e.g. religious community) (Haselsberger, 2014).

The **border** is mostly synonymous with boundaries. The English word "border" derives from the French term bordure [edge, border] which originally referred to the outer edge of particular things (e.g. of a shield). 'Border' used as a geopolitical phenomenon from the seventeenth century, but from the nineteenth century, the meaning of the 'border' is changed. An unambiguous and 'fixed' line both on the map and ground refers to 'border' (Biggs, 1999; Haselsberger, 2014). Border is a legal and arbitral line in space that is separating different jurisdictions, nations, cultures, etc. (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999).

According to Macmillan dictionary, "**No man's land** is an area of land between two countries that is not controlled by either of them." According to Cambridge dictionary, "an area or strip of land that no one owns or controls, such as a strip of land between two countries' borders, especially in a war. Or a situation or area of activity where there are no rules or that no one understands or controls because it belongs neither to one type nor another."

'**Borderlands** are crossroads where people and their institutions and traditions come together, creating distinctive ways of organizing space and transforming the seemingly fixed edges of empires and nations into fluid spaces' (Baud & Van Schendel, 1997).

> "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants." (Anzaldua, 1987).

The *'borderland'* is the surrounding regions of the international border which have a power relation and different cultural mix or clash with specifically in a political, spatial, cultural, economic, and social situation (Anzaldua, 1987).

The concept of borderlands is recently under the growing attention of (spatial) scientists and politicians, encouraged by the increasing governmental interest in cross-border regional planning.

The emergence of the Indo-Bangladesh border

The Indo-Bangladesh border is one of the most militarized borders in the world (Vogeler, 2010; Singh, 2020). 'Like all boundaries of the Indian subcontinent, Indo-Bangladesh border is one of the artificial superimposed borders, which made by the British colonial authorities over the existing cultural landscape' (Das, 2008; Saddiki, 2017).

After the victory of the British East India Company in the Battle of Plassey in 1757, nearly two hundred years of colonial-era started in India (Bunting, 2022; Sharma, 2020). The British East India Company ruled in India for more than one hundred years and an additional 90 years ruled by the British raj after the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (Perkins, 2019). Today's India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar are the integrated colony of the British East India company. In 1937 Myanmar (erstwhile Burma) was separated from the rest of the part of India and made an independent entity (Pillalamarri, 2017).

Colonial India was divided into two parts at the time of independence in 1947 (Bates, 2011). This division was made based on religion. India is a country with a Hindu majority and Pakistan is a country with a Muslim majority (Perkins, 2019). Then in 1971 Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) was separated from Pakistan for the linguistic division (Zakaria, 2019).

Various historically significant incidences happened in the 20th century during the last 50 years of the British period. At first, the British rulers divided the Bengal presidency into two parts in 1905. In the second term of Viceroy of India Lord Curzon, the Bengal Presidency was divided into two administrative divisions. One part was the Muslim majority province of East Bengal and Assam and the second part was the Hindu majority province of West Bengal (Spear, 1990) (Spear, 1990). This partition was highly opposed by the Hindu elites of Bengal province because they were going to lose their political clout. They started to protest everywhere in Bengal. This protest became the 'Swadeshi' movement and spread all over India (Spear, 1990; Ludden, 2002). Within this situation, Lord Minto was appointed as the new viceroy of Bengal on 18th November 1905. During this period Muslim elites of India feared for predominantly Hindu protest against the partition of Bengal and the Hindu majority in Indian politics (Ludden, 2002).

At this time different political parties demand different rights for the citizens of India from the British government unitedly. Voting rights is an important demand among them. In 1906 Muslim elites asked for a separate electorate for the Muslims to represents themselves independently. They also demanded proportional legislative representation reflecting both their status as former rulers and their record of cooperating with the British. As a result, the All India Muslim League was founded in December 1906 at Dacca (Ludden, 2002; Rizvi, 2000). The Muslims got a separate electorate under the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 (Bapu, 2013). But finally, this partition was annulled by the British due to the tremendous pressure of population resentment (Ray, 1977; Jamwal, 2004).

After the formation of the All India Muslim League, Hindu leaders started to unite for the creation of an organization to protect the rights of the Hindu community members (Bapu, 2013). In 1915, All India Hindu Mahasabha was formed after the amalgamation of different regional Hindu Sabhas. The Mahasabha campaigned for Hindu political unity for the development of Hindus in different sectors (Bapu, 2013). In various conferences of Mahasabha the leaders proposed

Hindus as a nation and the Muslim League also did the same. That's why Hindu and Muslim political leaders tried to construct Hindu and Muslim as two different nations based on religious identity (Bapu, 2013). Lala Lajpat Rai, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, demanded to bifurcate India into Muslims and non-muslim population in "The Tribune" of 14 December 1924 (Noorani, 2002). Then Veer Damodar Savarkar, leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, also brings the idea of the two-nation theory into the discussion (Khan, 1950; Talbot, 1999). After three years, Mohammad Ali Jinnah also demanded Pakistan. Finally, the Muslim League passed the Pakistan resolution in the Lahore Session on March 23, 1940 (Sarkar, 2014).

After more than one hundred years of British East India Company rule and an additional 90 years of the British Raj, the Indian subcontinent had finally achieved Independence on the 15th of August 1947 by a long anti-colonial struggle, violence, and bloodshed. Two self-governing countries India and Pakistan were evolved by the mediation of the last British governor-general of India (Perkins, 2019; Singh, 2020).

At the last phase of British rule, many political parties were presenting their demands. The creation of Pakistan out of India based on their religious identity as the Muslim nation was an important demand of the Muslim League. After 24 years of the creation of Pakistan, Bangladesh was created as an independent country out from Pakistan based on its linguistic identity as a nation.

The boundary line between India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh is known as the Radcliffe line as it was demarcated by Sir Cyril Radcliffe.

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a British lawyer, was appointed as the boundary commissioner in these (?) two boundary commissions (?) by the final British general of India Lord Mountbatten in July 1947 (Pletcher, 2016). The commission was chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe (S. K. Singh, 2020). Jawaharlal Nehru, a representative from the Indian National Congress, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, representative of the Muslim League, played an important role in the commission. Each commission had 5 members – Sir Cyril, 2 members nominated by the Muslim League, and 2 members nominated by the Congress Party. The Bengal Boundary Commission was also (?) chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe and assisted by Justice Bijan Kumar Mukherjea, Justice C.C. Biswas, Justice Abu Saleh Mohamed Akram, and Justice S. A. Rahman (REPORTS OF INTERNATIONAL ARBITRAL AWARDS, 1950; Chester, 2013). The Commission was constituted on June 30, 1947, under Section 3 of the Indian Independence Act, 1947. The Commission was required to prepare a report and submit it to the Governor-General of India before August 15, 1947 (Jamwal, 2004).

The demarcation of the boundary line is a very unthoughtful decision of Radcliffe (Perkins, 2019; Singh, 2020; Read & Fisher, 1997). He was given a target to complete his work within five weeks (Perkins, 2019). Sir Cyril Radcliffe was instructed to demarcate the boundaries in Punjab and Bengal based on religious majority and also like natural boundaries; communications, watercourses, and irrigation systems, as well as socio-political considerations, were also kept into consid-

eration (Read & Fisher, 1997; Singh, 2020). Radcliffe had no clear knowledge about the religious demography and history of India. He worked on the boundary line using census reports and some maps. He also gave weightage to factors such as strategic roads and irrigation patterns (Read & Fisher, 1997).

Cyril Radcliffe wrote in his report:

"The province (Bengal) offers few, if any, satisfactory natural boundaries, and its development has been on lines that do not well accord with a division by contiguous majority areas of Muslim and non-Muslim majorities." (REPORTS OF INTERNATIONAL ARBITRAL AWARDS, 1950).

Finally, on the 12th of August 1947, the boundary line demarcation was completed and it was published on the 17th of August 1947 (REPORTS OF INTERNATIONAL ARBITRAL AWARDS, 1950). The boundary between India and West Pakistan and India and East Pakistan is the result of the Radcliffe line. In 1971 East Pakistan was separated from Pakistan after the liberation war. After that the eastern part of the Radcliffe line served as the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The emergence of bordering practices in the context of securitization of Indo-Bangladesh border

Colonial India was partitioned based on religion. Punjab and Bengal province had an overall 50% population of both Hindu and Muslim communities (Spate, 1947; Dalrymple, 2015). So these two provinces are divided between two countries as per the decision by Radcliffe's boundary commission. This boundary line is not a very proper demarcation. Both countries have won some and also lost some (S. K. Singh, 2020). The partition left millions of Muslims on the Indian side and similar numbers of Hindus in Pakistani sectors. It sparked mass migrations by members of each religious community and also created widespread violence. As a result, a million people died. These incidents proved that the Radcliffe Line is the line of strife and dispute, even today (Dalrymple, 2015; Pletcher, 2016; Ansari, 2017; Pillalamarri, 2017).

After the Liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, Bangladesh is an independent state (Sengupta, 2001). Therefore eastern part of the Indo-Pakistan border serves as the Indo-Bangladesh border. India shares 4096.7 Km of its land border with Bangladesh. The five states of India, such as West Bengal (2216 km.), Assam (263 km), Meghalaya (443 km.), Tripura (856 km.) Mizoram (318 km.) are the border-sharing states (Jamwal, 2004; Bala, 2017; Saddiki, 2017).

The Indo-Bangladesh border runs through complex topography including floodplain areas, riverine lands, hills, jungles (Jamwal, 2004). This maximum portion of border area is heavily populated and highly cultivable. The boundary line stretches among these overpopulated areas. The agricultural lands, populated towns, and villages are carried out till the last inch of the border. The huge diversity of the border makes it a porous one, thus, posing a great challenge to border management (Das, 2008; Bhattacharjee, 2019; Bhattacharjee, 2019b).

The highly porous Indo-Bangladesh border is used as a route for smuggling livestock, food items, medicines, drugs from India to Bangladesh. This highly porous border is also the way of massive illegal immigration from Bangladesh to India. This cross-border mobility is treated as a very simple socio-economic phenomenon. This is a very common fact in the case of West Bengal because the Bangladeshi people share common cultural, social, linguistic, and also ethnic heritages or similarities with West Bengal (Van Schendel, 2004; Jones, 2009; Dabova, 2014; Das, 2016; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, 2017).

After the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state, disputes on the border are found in some areas of the Indo-Bangladesh border. To solve this problem, former Prime minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Former Prime minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman signed the Indo-Bangladesh Agreement in 1974 (Jamwal, 2004; Das, 2008; Quadir, 2015). The Agreement listed in detail the modalities to deal with each of the outstanding border issues including enclaves and undemarcated boundaries. The main aims of this agreement were to exchange the enclaves among those countries and simplify the international border. The agreement needed to be ratified by the two governments. Bangladesh ratified it in November 1974 but India did not (Jamwal, 2004; Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011-2012). A revised version of the agreement was adopted by the two countries on 7 May 2015, when the Parliament of India passed the 100th amendment to the Constitution of India (Bagchi, 2015).

The worldwide tension of terrorism in different times in different countries thrashed the world in 'global terror' and it is a threat of security for every country. According to the occurrences of 'global terror', "Muslims and the Islamic countries are generally described as violent, irrational and a threat to the security" (Jones, 2009). In the case of India, the threat perceptions about the Muslims and Islamic countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh are the same as per the global view (Khan, 2005). The securitization of the border with Pakistan was understandable because four wars have occurred in the past 60 years. Not only that "India routinely accused Pakistan of supporting anti-state movements in Kashmir and other parts of India." But India and Bangladesh are sharing very peaceful relations since India helped liberate Bangladesh in 1971 (Van Schendel, 2004; Asoori, 2020).

However, in the mid or late 1980s, the issue of the immigration of Chakmas into India became the issue of contention in bilateral relations with Bangladesh (Sarma, 2015; Das, 2016). Then the central government of India authorized a fence on the Bangladesh border in 1986. But only 5 percent of work was completed since 2000 (Van Schendel, 2005; Jones, 2009). Though, in present time the Chakmas are stateless people (Kumari and Yadav, 2020).

Therefore the terror from the Muslims was created after the Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya in December 1992. After this incident, widespread riots have occurred in the Megacities of India such as Bombay, Calcutta, etc. (State Bureau Reports, 1992). Then these incidents are exploded on the 12th of March 1993

in Bombay series bombings (Chadha, 2006), 16th of March 1993 Bowbazar bombings in Calcutta (Gargan, 1993) 8th August 1993 bombing of RSS office in Chennai. 21st may 1996 Lajpat Nagar blast in Delhi, 22nd may 1996 Dausa blast in Rajasthan (Times of India, 1996; The Economic Times, 1996), 1996 Brahmaputra mail train bombing, 22nd December 2000 terrorist attack on Red fort by Lashkar-e-Taiba (Times of India, 2007), 2001 Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly car bombing by Jaish-e-Mohammed (The Tribune, 2001), 2001 Indian parliament attack in New Delhi by two Pakistan-raised terrorist organizations of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed (Rediff.com, 2001). This series of terrorist attacks in one decade mostly securitized the border with Islamic majority countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 USA attacks, BJP led the government of India to give their full support to the 'United States' effort to fight extremism (Vajpayee, 2001). In 2004, the Congress-led UPA government came into power. They also take different initiatives to increase the internal security measures and speed up fencing projects (Oza, 2007). On 21st October 2001, India and United States signed the Mutual Assistance on Criminal Matters Treaty to eradicate the scourge of terrorism. In 2002, the prevention of Terrorist Activities Act (POTA) was passed by parliament (Agamben, 1998). Then, the large bombings occurred in Delhi in 2005 (rediff.com, 2005), Mumbai in 2006 (Singh, 2008) and Hyderabad in 2007. All these attacks were linked in media reports and Indian government statements to the extremist organization of Bangladesh such as 'Harkat-ul- Jihad'. Therefore the multiple targets and long duration of the horrific siege in Mumbai in November 2008 was the latest example of violence in India. These incidents also linked with Pakistan and Bangladesh (Jones, 2009; Bokhari, 2009).This chained violence and horrible events have reshaped the security practices of India, particularly India's political borders, and also changed the security discourse and border discourse in India. "*The inclusion of Bangladesh as an equal partner with Pakistan in supporting terrorist activities in India marks a fundamental shift in the framing of Bangladesh in the public discourse in India and the relations between the two governments*" (Jones, 2009). After the 2008 Mumbai attacks, different bombings and terrorist attacks occurred in different places of India since now (2013 Hyderabad blasts, March 2013 Srinagar attack, 2014 Bangalore bombing, 2016 Baramulla attack, 2019 Pulwama attack, etc.) (Raina, 2013; Dutta, 2018).

This chained terrorism, violence, and link-up of the Islamic terrorist organizations of Bangladesh and Pakistan in these insurgent activities securitized the political borders. It also creates anti-Bangladesh narratives in contemporary public discourse. These public discourses have accelerated the securitization process on the Indo-Bangladesh border and also speeded up the militarizing process. The Spatio-temporal development of bordering practices such as border fencing, border road construction, floodlighting, installation of other modern technologies and equipment, etc. are implemented in the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The spatio-temporal development of bordering practices in Indo-Bangladesh border

The Indo-Bangladesh border is one of the longest land borders in the world (Goyal, 2019; Bhattacharjee, 2019a). The porousness of the Indo-Bangladesh border increased the cross-border trade or smuggling of livestock, food items, medicines, drugs between India and Bangladesh and illegal immigration from Bangladesh to India and also use for other anti-national activities from across the border (Jamwal, 2004; Das, 2008; Bhattacharjee, 2019b).

The proper management of borders is of vital importance to national security. The management of our borders presents many challenges as this requires coordinated and concerted actions by administrative, diplomatic, security, intelligence, legal, regulatory and economic agencies of the country to secure frontiers. The first initiatives of border management or border securitization were taken in 1989 by starting the border fencing. But the government was concerned about the border management issue in 1999 after the Kargil conflict and a report was submitted by the Kargil Review Committee (Jamwal, 2004; Das, 2008). The government of India set up a task force on border management under the supervision of Madhav Godbole, as part of the Group of Ministers (GoMs) in April 2000 for considering the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and it also makes a holistic assessment of the national security system of India (Das, 2008; Jayal, 2001).

Border Outposts:

The GoMs report recommended the Ministry of Home Affairs to establish a separate 'Department of Border Management'. The department of Border Management has also been created by the Ministry of Home Affairs in January 2004 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2007)). The force assigns for the duties of border management is completely dedicated to Border management. Also, the committee recommended the development of infrastructure along the border such as border outposts, border fencing, floodlighting, border road construction, etc. (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2007).This force is completely devoted to guarding, regulating, and monitoring the border. This force is posted in specific entry and exit points to regulate the movements of the people and goods. Many border outposts are also set up on the Indo-Bangladesh border. These are given below:

> Border Out Posts (BOPs) are the main workstation of the BSF along the borders. These are self-contained defense outposts with a specified area of responsibility established along the entire continuum of land borders. The force is posted in these BOPs and the main work of this force is to deter trans-border criminals, infiltrators, and the hostile elements from indulging in the activities of intrusion/encroachment and border violations. Each BOPs is provided with the necessary infrastructure for accommodation, logistic supports, and combat functions (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018-2019) (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2017-2018).

According to the annual report of MHA 2014-15, this time Border security force patrolled 802 Border outposts on the Indo-Bangladesh border. In 1999 the committee of GoM recommended reducing the inter distance of BoPs to 3.5 km. So, 383 new border outposts were sanctioned for construction by the government on 16th February 2009. The construction was targeted to be completed in 2013-14. But due to the problems of land acquisition, public protests, and some other issues, the construction is delayed. Out of the 383 BOPs, 65 BOPs have been completed and 78 BOPs are in progress (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2014-2015).

According to the Annual report of the MHA 2015-2016, 86 BOPs

Name of State	Number of BOPs		
	Approved	Held	Composite BOPs
West Bengal	633	410	223
Meghalaya	125	108	17
Assam	91	85	6
Tripura	245	181	64
Mizoram	91	18	73
Total	1185	802	383

Table 1. Status of BOPs along Indo-Bangladesh Border
(Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs, 2014-15, 2015-16)

have been completed and the construction of 96 BOPs is in progress. The project is not completed until now. The land acquisition process is in progress and the construction of BOPs will be completed after the acquisition of the land (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2015-2016). According to the annual report of MHA 2016-17, 1011 BOPs are held by BSF along the Indo-Bangladesh border (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016-2017).

Name of State	Number of BOPs		
	Approved	Held	Composite BOPs
West Bengal	633	523	180
Meghalaya	125	121	15
Assam	91	91	6
Tripura	245	246	64
Mizoram	91	30	61
Total	1185	1011	326

Table 2. Status of BOPs along Indo-Bangladesh Border
(Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016-2017

After that 422 composite border outposts are also approved for construction by the government. Out of these 326, composite border outposts have been constructed and the rest of the work was supposed to be completed by July 2018. But it is not completed, yet. (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018-2019).

Border Fencing:

To prevent infiltration and smuggling along with the border areas, the Government of India planned to fence the Indo-Bangladesh border as similar to the Indo-Pakistan border. The GoM report also recommended fencing the entire land border through the Indo-Bangladesh border. This project was undertaken in two phases, Phase-I from 1987 to 1999 and phase-II from 2000 to the present (Das, 2008).

The Indo-Bangladesh border fencing project was started by the Government of India in 1989. The eight feet high and electrified fencing was constructed in some areas which are the hotspot of illegal immigration and border crossing and the other 70% of fencing was constructed roughly (Dabova, 2014). In Phase-I, 857 Km border fencing project was sanctioned and approximately 854 km of border fencing work was completed. After that in phase-II, the government-sanctioned 2502 km long border for fencing, and 1930 km fencing work was completed within early 2007. But in phase II, there are lots of problems in the construction of the fencing. In 2003, it is found that 200 villages and ten thousand people of India live in no man's land. If the fence is constructed according to the Radcliffe Line, then those people of India get access to Bangladesh easily but their own country is restricted for them (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2013-2014; Chakravarty, 2018).

The annual report of the Ministry of Home Affairs published the state-wise progress of the border fencing in the Indo-Bangladesh Border.

Length in km

Name of States	Border Length	PHASE I	PHASE II		Total (PH.I+ PH.II)
		Completed	Sanctioned	Completed	Completed
West Bengal	2216.7	507	1021	674.05	1181.05
Assam	263	149.29	71.5	51.42	200.71
Meghalaya	443	198.06	201	180.19	378.25
Tripura	856	0	736	668.04	668.04
Mizoram	318	0	400	107.75	107.75
Total	4096.7	854.35	2429.5	1681.45	2535.8

Table 3. FENCINGSource: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs, 2007-08

Out of this work, 296 km of border fencing was completed during 2007-08 in the Mizoram sector. In Tripura, a 120 km border was also fenced during 2007-08.

Also, 3250.60 Km of border roads had been constructed out of a sanctioned length of 3663 Km as of 31st December 2007 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2007-2008).

Most of the border fencing constructed under phase-I in West Bengal, Assam, and Meghalaya has been damaged and deteriorated at several parts for bad weather conditions, repeated submergence, etc. Then the Government of India has sanctioned a project named Phase-III for the erection of 861 km. of fencing replacing the entire fencing constructed under Phase-I at an estimated cost of Rs.884 crores. This work was targeted to complete within 2007-08. But there arise some problems in the construction of fencing within 150 yards for the objection raised by the Bangladesh rifles, limited working season, difficult topographical features, etc. This work was expected to be completed in March 2010. The work has been assigned to the Central Public works Department, National Buildings Construction Corporation, and National project Construction Corporation. A total of 749 km of border fencing has been replaced. The balanced work merged with the work of phase-II in 2012 by the Cabinet ministry. Out of the total length of the border, 3300 km of the border fencing was completed beyond the 150-yard zone within its territory in the line with the boundary agreement. (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2008-09; Ministry of Home Affairs, 2010-2011).

Length in km.

Name of State	PHASE I		PHASE II		Total (PH.I+ PH.II)	
	Sanctioned	Completed	Sanctioned	Completed	Sanctioned	Completed
West Bengal	507	507	964	729.15	1471	1236.15
Assam	152.31	149.29	76.72	74.94	229.03	224.23
Meghalaya	198.06	198.06	264.17	148.6	462.23	346.66
Tripura	0	0	848	782.46	848	782.46
Mizoram	0	0	349.33	233.54	349.33	233.54
Total	857.37	854.35	2502.22	1968.69	3359.59	2823.04

Table 4. FENCING. Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs, 2013-14

The total length of the Indo-Bangladesh border sanctioned for fencing is 3359.59 km; out of which about 2823.046 km of fencing has been completed up to 31.03.2014 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2013-2014). The annual report of the MHA in 2015-16 reported that 2710.02 km border fencing was provisionally completed up to 31.12.2015. As of 23 December 2015, the Government had sanctioned barbed wire fencing of 3326.14 km along the Indo-Bangladesh border. Out of this, 2708.77 km of fencing had been completed. The target for completion of the project was given by March 2019. But there have been lots of problems at the border such as land acquisition cases and protests by the border population, physical barriers, etc. It delayed the progress of the work. This project was going on and it was expected that it will

be completed in March 2020 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018-2019). For the pandemic situation by the COVID-19, this work is not completed still now.

Border Road

The construction of border roads is another important aspect of the Border Area Development Programme for better border monitoring. The government sanctioned 4223.04 km border roads to develop a better communication system in the border areas. Within this 3660.70 km border roads have been constructed and other works are going on (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018-2019).

Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India sanctioned 3663 km length for the border road construction. Among them, 3250.60 km of border roads have been constructed. The phase-wise progress of roads as of December 31, 2007, is given in Table 5.

Length in km.

Name of State	PHASE I	PHASE II		Total (PH.I+ PH.II)
	Completed	Sanctioned	Completed	Completed
West Bengal	1616.57	0	0	1616.57
Assam	176.5	77.5	61.7	238.2
Meghalaya	211.29	204	200.85	412.14
Tripura	480.51	269	210.14	690.65
Mizoram	153.06	246.5	139.98	293.04
Total	2637.93	797	612.67	3250.6

Table 5. BORDER ROADS. Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs, 2007-08

According to the Annual report of MHA 2008-2009, 3326.82 km of border roads have been constructed out of a sanctioned length of 4326.24 km. (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2008-2009). Details are given in Table 6.

Length in km.

Name of State	PHASE I		PHASE II		Total (PH.I+ PH.II)	
	Sanctioned	Completed	Sanctioned	Completed	Sanctioned	Completed
West Bengal	1770	1616.57	0	0	1770	1616.57
Assam	186.33	176.5	138.7	74.56	325.03	251.06
Meghalaya	211.29	211.29	327.87	200.85	539.16	412.14
Tripura	545.37	480.51	564.12	252.45	1109.49	732.96
Mizoram	153.4	153.06	429.16	161.03	582.56	314.09
Total	2866.39	2637.93	1459.85	688.89	4326.24	3326.82

Table 6. Border Roads. Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs 2008-09

The government-sanctioned 4223.04 km of border roads are meant to develop a better communication system in the border areas. Within this 3660.70 km border roads have been constructed and other works are going on (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018-2019).

Floodlight in Border

The government of India took an initiative to set up floodlights in the Indo-Bangladesh border for close surveillance during night hours with the construction of fencing, border roads, and border outposts. A pilot project of floodlighting started in West Bengal. Over 277 km of border areas completed Flood-lighting from December 2003 to June 2006 (Annual report of MHA 2018-2019). The Government has also sanctioned a project of floodlighting about 2840 km of the Indo-Bangladesh border at an estimated cost of Rs. 1327 crores in November 2007. The work has been assigned to the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), National Project Construction Corporation (NPCC), and Engineering Projects (I) Limited (EPIL). This work was scheduled to be completed in 2011-12. Within this session, the work of the erection of poles in 211 km along the laying of cables in 60 km has been completed (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2009-2010).

According to the Annual report of MHA 2010-11, the work of floodlighting has been completed in a total of 445 km border areas (WB- 245 km and Tripura-200 km) and 1200 km of floodlighting work is under progress (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2010-2011). During 2011-12, 775 km of floodlighting work has been completed. Additionally, in about 600 km. work of erection of poles, laying of cables, and fitting of fixtures is under progress (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2011-2012). The work of floodlighting, as of 31st July 2013, for the length of 1535.31 km (West Bengal -700 km, Assam -30 km, Mizoram-27.10 km, Meghalaya -148 km, Tripura -630.21 km) has been completed and balance work is in progress (Das, 2010; Ministry of Home Affairs, 2012-2013). Details are given in Table 7.

Length in km.

Name of State	Sanctioned	Completed	Balance
West Bengal	1134.13	809	325.13
Assam	208.74	114.4	94.34
Meghalaya	443	159.2	283.8
Tripura	718.47	642.26	76.21
Mizoram	335.66	38.2	297.46
Total	2840	1763.06	1076.94

Table 7. Floodlighting Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs, 2013-14

The progress of floodlights work within 31st December 2015 is given in Table 8.

Length in km.

Name of State	Sanctioned	Completed	Balance
West Bengal	1134.13	956.69	177.44
Assam	208.74	217.44	0
Meghalaya	443	156.6	286.4
Tripura	718.47	660.8	57.67
Mizoram	335.66	51.11	284.55
Total	2840.90	2042.64	806.06

Table 8: Floodlighting. Source: Annual report of Ministry of Home Affairs 2015-16

The works were scheduled to be completed by March 2012. However, the works have been spilled over. Accordingly, a CCS note is under process seeking an extension of time by another two years for the completion of works. A review meeting of Indo-Bangladesh border issues was held on 07.12.2017 at Kolkata under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Home Minister with Chief Ministers of Indo-Bangladesh Border States (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2017-2018). In total 2698.6 km length of border Floodlights installation has been approved and out of it, 2357.29 km has been completed. The rest of the work was to be completed by March 2020 hopefully (Das, 2010; Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018-2019). But for the pandemic situation by the COVID-19, the work is not completed still now.

But after all the holistic developments in the border management system, there have been some problems to guard the riverine part of the Indo-Bangladesh border. So the Government of India has taken initiatives to manage these parts of the border. MHA launched a Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS). CIBMS 'includes integration of manpower, sensors, networks, intelligence, and Command & Control Solutions to improve situational awareness at different levels of hierarchy to facilitate prompt and informed decision making and quick response to emerging situations.' In the first phase, the 61 km riverine border of Assam was taken under this project and has a plan to implement in Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and West Bengal (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018-2019).

After the development of border management by the government of India, many issues about smuggling and immigration were reported on the border. Different controversial cases of violence by border guards were reported at different times.

The narratives of political parties on the Indo-Bangladesh border management or bordering practices

Under the recommendation of the Group of Ministers, many important measures are taken by the Government of India for strengthening border security.

The Government of India has set up a department of Border Management, under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The government of India takes many measures for the Indo-Bangladesh border management such as erecting fences, developing border roads, and floodlighting, issuing identity cards to Indian citizens, cooperating with Bangladesh, making a cross-border trade relationship with Bangladesh, etc. (Das, 2008).

The political leaders of political parties have a different perception of the Indo-Bangladesh border management and immigration issues (Das, 2008). The political leaders deliver speeches in political rallies on these issues according to their perceptions and conveniences. So it creates various narratives on border management. But these narratives do not always depict the actual situation of border management.

This study analyzes the securitization process of the Indo-Bangladesh border and describes the progress in the Indo-Bangladesh border management and the actions of the government in different periods. In this section the author tries to highlight the narratives of the different political parties on the Indo-Bangladesh border.

Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), a national-level political party, has a tough viewpoint about the Indo-Bangladesh border. The leaders of this party always highlight the porous nature of the border and emphasize the tighter border control, including militarization of the border. The present Prime Minister of India and the Hindu nationalist leader Narendra Modi highlights the issue during the election rallies in 2014 (Dabova, 2014; Krishna, 2014).

Narendra Modi said that "illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in West Bengal should have their 'bags packed' in case he comes to power", accusing the state government of being too soft. At a rally on Sunday in West Bengal, he accused the state government of "looking to secure votes from ethnic and religious minorities." (Krishna, 2014; Dabova, 2014).

Mr. Modi also accused the state government of West Bengal of the soft corner to illegal immigrants. He said "You are concerned about infiltrators and not your own people… they must go back, they are robbing the youths of India of their livelihood", Modi told the rally in West Bengal, which borders Assam. (Dhar, 2014).

Not only the illegal immigration issues and facts of border control, but BJP leaders are also against the land boundary agreement with Bangladesh. So they heavily criticized the agreements. Current Defence Minister of India and the BJP top leader Mr. Rajnath Singh labeled this agreement as "A *loss game for India. After leaving 17000 acres, we will receive only 7000 acres. A loss of 10,000 acres.*" (Sarkar, 2014)

India's Home Ministry Affairs Minister Amit Shah has vowed to remove illegal migrants from the state of West Bengal through a government scheme by introducing the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Mr. Shah told in a packed rally in Kolkata, *"The chief minister [of West Bengal] says she will not let NRC happen in West Bengal, but I am assuring you, each and every infiltrator in India will be shown the door,"* ("NRC: Amit Shah Vows to Eject Illegal Migrants from West Bengal," 2019).

The speeches of the BJP leaders try to create narratives on the securitization of Bangladeshi immigration, the militarization of the highly porous Indo-Bangladesh border, etc.

Many regional parties of Border States such as All Assam Student Union (AASU), All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) of Assam, Khasi Student union of Meghalaya and Trinamool Congress, Communist Party in West Bengal, etc. also have strong standpoints about the Indo-Bangladesh border management and Bangladeshi immigration issues.

Immigration from Bangladesh is a big problem in Assam. In 1973 AASU and AAGSP launched a mass movement in Assam, which is known as Anti Foreigners Movement. Its main objectives were the detection and deportation of illegal immigrants. In 1983 'Illegal Immigration act' was passed. Now in contemporary India NRC in Assam is the result of this anti-foreigners movement (Chattopadhyay, 1990).

The general secretary of AGP, Atul Bora, had said in his book on AASU conventions, "But, what argument is it that we Assamese would have to sacrifice our home and hearth, our land, for their (foreigners) freedom?" Bora, who is currently the president of the AGP and had held the position of AASU general secretary during the Agitation, was a staunch critic of the Indira Gandhi government amid demands to protect Assam from foreigners settlement. The same sentiment, perhaps, echoes in the protests today, albeit without the presence of AGP, Atul Bora, and Prafulla Mahanta (Sharma, 2019). The regional parties of Assam are always against immigration. So they always spoke out for border fencing and stopping Bangladeshi immigration. They create this immigration issue as the ethnic crisis, identity threats, and also linguistic minority threats for the Assamese (Nath & Nath, 2010; Sarma, 2015).

Anti-foreigners (Bengali) movement also occurred in Meghalaya under the leadership of Khasi Student Union which started in 1979. Foreigners/Bengalis were killed for this movement. Anti-Bengalis feeling continued even today particularly in Shillong, and scars of the 1970s riots remain; regional parties of Meghalaya denied membership to its resident who are non-indigenous people for they consider them a threat to the indigenous people (Dutta, 2018).

West Bengal is also a co-ethnic neighbor of Bangladesh. In 1977, the Left Front government was formed in West Bengal and ruled for 34 years. This government has a soft corner for the Bangladeshi immigrants and provides shelters to fleeing Bangladesh immigrants. The communist government uses the immigrants as their vote bank (Refugee Review Tribunal, 2005).

Dr. Upadhyaya discusses the ambivalent attitude of the West Bengal government towards the migrants:

"Despite initial resistance which saw West Bengal providing shelters to fleeing Bangladesh immigrants during the height of Assam agitation, the communist regime fell into line with other border states in the drive against foreigners. Here the political will to accommodate Bengali coethnics was superseded by the economic pressures." (Upadhyaya, 2006).

Initially, the major political parties such as Congress and CPI(M) ignored the Bangladeshi immigrants in West Bengal and northeastern states. But further, they treated the immigrants as their vote bank (Sheno, 2003). According to a projection of the West Bengal legislative assembly, 52 *seats among 292 constituencies are controlled by Bangladeshi immigrants, and the other 100 seats are partially influenced by the immigrants (Upadhyaya, 2006). So for the long reaped political mileage of the Communist Party of India, they always help and also protect the migrants. In West Bengal, 55 lakh ration cards have been issued to Bangladeshi immigrants (Upadhyaya, 2006).*

Trinamool Congress Party is the ruling party of West Bengal now. This party has a dual standpoint on the border and immigration issue. Within a few months when Assam Citizens' list was published, Chief Minister of Bengal Mamata Banerjee has 'pitched herself as a fierce critic of the Assam citizens' list' and "Ms. Banerjee has also predicted a civil war and bloodbath if the centre stays the course." But 13 years ago in 2005, she was against the Bangladeshi immigration. (Tikku, 2018).

The West Bengal CM, Mamata Banerjee has stated in the LS on 4.8.2005:

"The infiltration in Bengal has become a disaster now... I have both the Bangladeshi & the Indian voters list. This is a very serious matter. I would like to know when would it be discussed in the House?" (Jaitley, 2018).

Political analysts said that the total politics of West Bengal in the case of favoring Bangladeshi immigrants depend on electoral politics. In 2005, CPIM was the ruling party in West Bengal and they were getting the support of the Muslim community and illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. So Mamata Banerjee commented against this immigrants. Then Trinamool changed their political strategies on the immigrants' issue (Tikku, 2018). In Bengal, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) is playing an advocate of illegal immigrants and has benefitted in a major way (India Today, 2014). The illegal immigrants were earlier treated as the vote bank of the Left Front, but later they changed their side in the last assembly elections in West Bengal (Kumar, n.d.). Now she supports the minorities in the Anti-NRC movement (Tikku, 2018).

The opinions of the political leaders of different parties create narratives on this issue. There is no such kind of strong anti-immigrant standpoint of the Congress party during the ruling period. The leaders of the Congress party do not securitize the issue. Although in political narratives congress is missing in the case of anti-immigrants standpoint, so the opponent party, mainly BJP, termed them as a sympathizer of the immigrants (Acharyya, 2019). But when congress is in power, they also take all measurements for militarizing the border.

They established the maximum number of border outposts, border fencing, installation of floodlights, and border roads for border management and securitized the border.

In another way BJP, a nationalist party, creates an anti-immigrant image in national politics. In their narrative, BJP always emphasizes border securitization (Jones, 2009). According to the annual reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs, it finds that maximum works are done from 1989-2014. In that period congress was the ruling party for maximum time. So it is clear that Congress does a better job in the case of border management. BJP party does not work so much for border management. But they create securitized narratives in maximum time. So it may be concluded that the narratives are not always justified with the work performance of the governments on the border.

Conclusion

This study makes a clear historical outline of the creation of the Indo-Bangladesh border. There are many conflicting incidents behind the emergence of the Indo-Bangladesh border. Finally in 1947 Indo-Pakistan border evolved and in 1971 Indo-Bangladesh border originated. This border is the longest land border that India shares with its neighbor country. But the highly porous nature of the border and its cross-bordering practices make a new concern for managing the border. The government of India takes all measures for protecting the border. This work is progressed from time to time. But the maximum works were done from 1989 to 2014. The rest of the works are still in progress and some reconstruction is going on till now. Political leaders try to securitize the Indo-Bangladesh border and its cross-bordering practices, mainly illegal immigration, by creating political narratives. Some political parties behaved as a sympathizer of the illegal immigrants and some use them as their vote bank. But actually, these parties do not make proper and quick initiatives to prevent cross-bordering practices. So there we have lots of differences between political narratives and border management.

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