

## Introduction

This volume seeks to provide the first comprehensive social history of the Punjab border. This international border, which was created in 1947 with the end of British colonial rule, defines the boundary of the newly independent states of India and Pakistan. Along the over 550-kilometre section of this western boundary, the Punjab border bears many of the hallmarks of its South Asian prototype. It divided a population that spoke the same language and shared similar cultural traditions. Nevertheless, over the intervening years, territorial anxieties over security and sovereignty triggered concerns regarding unregulated mobilities and the prevalence of informal economies. The border was surveyed, demarcated and marked with pillars, security forces were deployed, and in the aftermath of Sikh militancy in the 1980s, a section was fenced off by India. This book provides a unique insight into the lived realities of the Punjab borderland. This looks at the process of boundary making and its implications for the local people—who lived in the immediate proximity of the border and experienced it most directly in their everyday lives—as well as for the divided cities of Lahore and Amritsar, which fell narrowly on either side of the international border.

Borders are margins and boundaries, which could be interpreted as spaces of both constraints and opportunities. Security analysts and a burgeoning body of scholars have sought to constitute the issue of the Pakistan border as a sensitive one and a matter of national security. They frame the border as a site where the state fought for its sovereignty and the border population suffered from interstate conflicts, presenting the periphery of nation-state as a lawless and backward zone. The focus of raucous debates in the public sphere and much scholarly work has been on Pakistan's 'political economy of defence', thus garnering public support for increased border security.<sup>1</sup> This has intensified the widely accepted notion of early Pakistan as a 'fearful' state with weak control over its frontiers and has contributed to strategic insecurity and the military's dominance over politics.<sup>2</sup> This dominant narrative of the genesis of Pakistan's precarious security condition as a legacy of Partition, focusing on the Kashmir dispute and its accompanied competition for geographical imaginaries, is limited however. It does not address how the new postcolonial borderlands deal with the state, which results in the presentation of border-dwelling people as 'a fixed category'.<sup>3</sup>

Borders and borderlands need to be understood as a unit of analysis, social process and discourse, rather than as mere geographical locations in space.<sup>4</sup> They are often imagined as impervious and enclosing frontiers, yet many of them are, in reality, fluid, porous and function as zones of blending, creative interface and resource circulation.<sup>5</sup> Recent scholarship notes that people living in the borderlands have not been passive victims of boundary drawing and insecurity at the margin of the state.<sup>6</sup> Dispelling the often-held view of an increasingly closed Punjab border, this book probes cross-border connectivity and the development of contraband economics and reveals how they were contingent with the processes of boundary making and definitions of nation, citizen, legal, illegal and state surveillance. Moving beyond the established historiographical narrative of focusing on the Pakistan borders as 'sensitive spaces', this book contributes to the emerging scholarship on borderland studies that have begun to consider the border as creating new opportunities along with uncertainties for borderland communities. Nugent refers to this as 'a single package' that make borders both spaces of ambivalence and ambiguity as well as 'fascinating research sites'.<sup>7</sup>

While using many of the insights of this scholarship, and especially that of informal economics that has defined local 'everyday border' as a vibrant site of economic activity countering statist law and fiscal sovereignty,<sup>8</sup> *The Punjab Borderland* engages with the 'effects of borders' as 'a theatre of opportunity'<sup>9</sup> that offers 'manifold resources'<sup>10</sup> to communities inhabiting close to it, providing livelihoods, enabling social mobility and political status as well as serving as a sanctuary against state incursions. In the case of the South Asian borderlands, much scholarship has moved away from the top-down approaches that view borders as constraint, remote and static lines. Van Schendel has studied the Bengal borderland as a 'resource' that opened up 'new perspectives with regard to the economic and social aspects of Partition'.<sup>11</sup> Far from being marginal, border communities in Punjab have been active participants in shaping both the contours of the boundary-marking process and everyday economics. Chester has argued that the Punjab border provided a 'safe space' for those who were driven by crime, offering a departure from the sovereignty of the state.<sup>12</sup>

While this volume is situated in this scholarship, it also directly investigates how the neighbours parted by the 1947 Partition continued to correspond with each other long after the drawing of the Radcliffe boundary, regardless of the imperatives of state-building as the new states sought to decide who could and could not enter their territorial boundaries. This study considers cross-border mobilities as a reality of life at the Punjab borderland, a necessary condition of patron–client network, and depicts a border that was often vibrant, transgressed, resourceful and connected to the larger transnational world. Borders provide useful insights into the state–society relations from a different perspective,

an understanding of the state's legitimacy and an understanding of their effects of the border as a social construction that influences everyday life.<sup>13</sup> Studying the South Asian postcolonial boundary offers challenging insights into the inner workings, complexities and limitations of the early Pakistan state and its relations with its Indian neighbour in the immediate period after Partition. The full complexity of the demarcation of the new international boundary and the establishment of border institutions as well as the interactions of state and borderland society could best be understood through an examination of the changes that took place in the 'everyday state' along the new international border in the years preceding independence.<sup>14</sup>

While this study builds on the existing scholarship that has orbited around the question of continuity versus change, it presents a new phenomenon by directly considering the implications of the new international boundary between India and Pakistan. Looking at the early history of Pakistan through the site of the evolving border allows us to glimpse many unexpected stories and varied contestations of citizens with the everyday state. Nugent reminds us that 'for those more interested in the state and its attendant effects, border towns provide an excellent insight into how states seek to promote their agents and how their advances are received, appropriated and very often thwarted'.<sup>15</sup> Where border towns

do face each other across the line they have generally not had their backs turned to one another, but have emerged out of mutually-embedded relationships. This partly reflects the limitations of state initiatives to manage space and partly the skill with which populations have woven their livelihood strategies around the existence of borders mutually-embedded relationships.<sup>16</sup>

Talbot notes the Partition of Punjab transformed the 'twin cities' of Lahore and Amritsar from 'central economic hubs into border cities', disrupting the existing social, commercial and kin networks.<sup>17</sup> This book investigates how these parted cities and new postcolonial borderlanders grasped the new international border and how the nation-state functioned and articulated its territorial sovereignty in liminal spaces. It shows how the local population capitalised on an increasingly porous border and an advantageous geography, with an economy of enterprising locals eager to participate in the trade, to create an organised and profitable contraband industry that served the interests of all levels of society, particularly in the divided cities of Lahore and Amritsar.

What were the everyday livelihood coping mechanisms of the parted neighbours as postcolonial borderland citizens? This book uncovers a complex process between the ways in which the Punjab borderland communities responded to the new international border and shows how it became part of the socially lived experience of ordinary people during a phased transition—from colonial subjects to border citizens—from boundary making to the

border fencing. *The Punjab Borderland* relates the findings to the function of the border as both material realities and an institutional demarcation of an international boundary line and shows how both formal and informal exchanges opened new possibilities for negotiations, reconciliation and readiness for shared futures, away from a past haunted by Partition. By maintaining the pre-partition existing social ties and shared mundane bonds, the Punjab borderland societies strengthened across border co-existence when India and Pakistan were adversely advancing dissimilar policies and ideologies on unsettled differences. While the standard accounts portray Partition as closing them off, an assessment of borderland as a site of the interplay between people from both sides of the divide, as well as the interface between the informal and formal and the legal and illegal, provides an important remedial to the static and linear representation of the border. *The Punjab Borderland* will ask how border dwellers of Partition adjusted to the borderland situation when the new nation-states strove to criminalise their activities and what modes of resistance and strategies they adopted to extract different types of resources from the borderland. By resources, it refers to both material and immaterial resources, such as social relations across the border and economic benefits such as 'smuggling'.<sup>18</sup>

## **Partition, Borders and Borderlands**

Borders have been conceptualised in terms of embryonic, infant, adolescent, adult, declining and defunct stages.<sup>19</sup> These broad models provide a useful exploratory tool but need not be seen as stages in a linear evolution of borderlands, or a simple development sequence from 'closed' to 'open' or 'soft' to 'hard', but are subject to the national and international forces that push for different forms of permeability and closure.<sup>20</sup> In the 'life cycle of borders', the India–Pakistan border (IPB), in Punjab, would be defined as an adult border. Van Schendel has analysed South Asian borderlands, moving beyond the map drawing of the Radcliffe Boundary Commission, to reveal the confusion and delays in demarcating the boundary on the ground. He has conceptualised borders in terms of 'adult', in the case of Punjab, and 'adolescent', in the case of Bengal.<sup>21</sup> While the latter has been 'half open', the former has been permanently closed.

While this volume is influenced by this scholarship, its analysis, in different ways, suggests otherwise. It confronts the fundamental assumptions regarding the Punjab border as a 'hard' one and its Bengal counterpart as an 'adolescent', as Van Schendel has drawn. This volume departs from current scholarship by revealing that the Punjab border was as porous as its Bengal counterpart, at least up until the late 1980s. Nevertheless, in the wake of Sikh militancy in Indian Punjab, uncertainties over territorial sovereignty prompted alarms

over unfettered mobilities, and thus the erection of fencing was initiated in 1987—four decades after Partition. Partition has contributed to border studies a different set of concerns as per the locational significance of the IPB.<sup>22</sup> Much recent scholarship has extended the historical understanding of the most important everyday interactions between the postcolonial state and its new citizens relating to refugee status and resettlement, state practices over citizenship, and categories of identities and belonging in South Asia.<sup>23</sup>

All this brings us to ask whether the aftermath of Partition could be gauged through a different lens than it has been. Partition is often formulated in terms of suffering and severing. Could cross-border mobility and materiality be considered as a form of resistance to the parted region of Punjab? Partition studies have largely ignored vast swaths of economic experience when, as Van Schendel notes, the ‘border turned neighbours into citizens of different states ... often these neighbours entertained work relations with each other. They had to devise ways to continue these relations, or create new ones’.<sup>24</sup> A borderland perspective in terms of lived material realities and mobilities highlights the concept of interrelationships between state agents and citizens ‘as the intersection and effects in border landscapes and lives’ rather than merely as a political contested outcome of Partition.<sup>25</sup> A focus on the borderland, thus, feeds into localised projects that shape processes of state-formation, and the border way of life, sometimes at odds with the state project of using the border as a tool of statecraft for realising its territorial statehood.<sup>26</sup> Borders are both vital symbols of statehood and spaces of refusal, whereby borderland communities do not necessarily exhibit overt state power but refuse to abide by the geographical framings of the nation-states.<sup>27</sup> State discourses of border control often create an equal and opposite effect among border residents, who evade state-created boundaries through a variety of modes, including smuggling as ‘an anti-state movement’, which raise questions of loyalty and belonging.<sup>28</sup> Painter argues that like other illicit activities associated with borders, smuggling could play an important role in ‘structuring the relationships between citizens and the state’.<sup>29</sup> The success or failure of a customs regime in hindering unauthorised activity both indicates and impacts the capacity of that state to exert its dominance within these spheres.

The Partition of Punjab led to an acute economic crisis at another level. This study investigates the role of contraband in state-making processes and the postcolonial developments. In the making of West Africa, Nugent has deftly shown how these processes travelled ‘closely together’.<sup>30</sup> Within months of the chaotic scenes of Partition, India and Pakistan devised an entire network of permits and passports to control the mobility of people and to tax and regulate trade.<sup>31</sup> An examination of the working of ‘everyday state’ involving boundary making, border policing, customs practices and cross-border interactions helps

in grasping the complex interplay between defiance and nation formation in the years immediately after 1947. The constant struggle between the state and cross-border mobilities played out in the Punjab border where the boundary demarcation remained unfixed years after Partition, and state control was diminished by both the region's vastness and shared cultural homogeneity of the borderland communities. Contraband became a common feature of border life almost immediately and presented a challenge to the territorial integrity of the state and to the project of a border-making process. In this respect, smuggling largely to be situated in the 'informal' sphere as a parallel system to the 'formal' economics, encompassing both state and non-state actors and compelling the states to exert advances to reinforce their international boundaries and regulate regional economies. As we shall describe in the chapters, very often the border dwellers thwarted these efforts and, most importantly, these contests glued the region's parted neighbours, who shared cultural and linguistic similarities. This book investigates how the borderland communities reacted, adopted and negotiated to the changed circumstances as the two states sought to disentangle their local economies from the intricacies of the border regions. It also shows how the border became the most important contraband trade waystation and a thriving market for consumption in the urban centres. Both India and Pakistan failed to control the 'illicit' trade that raised questions about the limitation of their legitimacy and authority, at least in the early years after decolonisation.

Borders create their own economic opportunities outside of the legal frame.<sup>32</sup> Smuggling thus offers an insight into how border formation affected local populations and how the idea of nationhood reshaped and reconfigured the borderland. A study of smuggling, as is undertaken in this volume, attempts to precisely do this. In other words, it seeks to fill the colossal temporal and structural gap that exists in our understanding of the Punjab borderland's ties with the nation-state, while also illustrating how the local population overlapped to create a web of sociability and informal economic transactions, which were more intricate than official cross-border connections. As the findings of this book will reveal, smugglers brought the divided cities of Lahore and Amritsar closer through contraband networks by utilising their pre-partition connections when India and Pakistan terminated all commercial and social links between them in the immediate period after Partition. Smugglers were the harbingers of consumer change in postcolonial Lahore in many ways through their covert activities of the contrabanding, circulating and retailing of 'Indian goods', at prices well below those set by law-abiding traders. Lahore's post-independence development has not been previously studied in this way. Here, the book fills in these gaps by introducing previously inaccessible new primary sources and reading them against the grain of the officially sanctioned nationalist historiography.

Much scholarship on contraband trade has examined local moral economics as a system of value questioning the fixities of law and economic sovereignty, in which people make their everyday mundane and social realities essential. Borderland strategies rest on ‘defiance and accommodation’ where border dwellers both recognise the conditions of regulation and pursue the ways to defy the border for everyday mundane gains, often through knowledge of local topographies as well as the complicity of border institutions. Clandestine activities of crossing the border constitute a ‘border effect’ that counters the ‘state effect’ of territorial control. Scholarship on the India–Bangladesh border has shown how ordinary border citizens negotiated territorial ambiguities and porous boundaries, simultaneously confronting state incursions and seizing opportunities to forge distinct borderland identities.<sup>33</sup> In the African borderlands case, some have argued that the very creation of the boundary is ‘bound to have an impact on the local economic geography, opening up new avenues of profitable commerce when they had not previously existed’.<sup>34</sup>

How could these insights be useful for the study of the Punjab borderland? Could cross-border mobilities be featured as an act of defiance by border residents to the imposition of a state-sanctioned partitioned geography on their native lifeworld? *The Punjab Borderland* examines the border as a zone of resistance for the continuation of older trade relations, blending and creative strategies by ordinary citizens to exploit it for a mundane purpose and, finally, the border as a place for expanding state intervention in the regional economy as well as a site of anxiety within the state itself. To understand border-related local lifeworld, border studies are concerned with the question of how ordinary border people narrate ‘their’ borders.<sup>35</sup> For borderland communities, some have argued that the border and its crossings have a particular set of meanings because they are lived out and experienced.<sup>36</sup> Others note what borderlanders deem ‘licit’ often contradicts with what governments or non-borderlands define as ‘legal’.<sup>37</sup> This conceptualisation is especially pronounced in postcolonial India and Pakistan, as both states positioned their borderlands as economic and ideological showpieces, discrete from the opposing regimes as well as from their own heartlands.

The legality–illegality relations indeed are important, but this book is not primarily about contraband. It intersects with other practices, processes and performances rooted in border dynamics, focusing on the initiative and creativity of the Punjab borderland dwellers. Aside from being a study of the smuggling economy and its consequences, it is a social history of the Punjab borderland society and presents a thematic discussion on the various aspects of everyday borderland lives. This will be done by delving into ‘localized layers of complexity’<sup>38</sup> by examining local-level interactions and changes to explore borderland transition and societal transformation. Did the Punjabi borderland societies believe in the new international border and its legal implications in

the immediate years after independence? How did they, at the margin of the state, negotiate with the everyday realities of life? How did they conduct cross-border contraband business by resisting state efforts to impose restrictions on their movements? How did they form their own values about breaking laws in a local milieu? How did this shape and disrupt state-making processes through local practices? Finally, how do these set of questions help us to conceptualise the border landscape, prosaic dimensions of borderland life and everyday economics as an object of study?

Answers to these questions have relevance which reach well beyond Punjab to many other parts of the world where borderlanders have shared cultural affinities. How did territorial partitions' borders come about, and how did parted borderlanders deal with them? How does the story of the Punjab border tell us something new, which is different from other borders? Borderland studies have identified a few main types of border populations in terms of ethnic identities. Concerning the African borders, Asiwaju has noted that where boundaries have separated 'cultural areas', cross-border integration actively took place every day and borderlanders ignored the arbitrary lines where 'the partition can hardly be said to have taken place'.<sup>39</sup> For this analytical purpose, the Punjab borderland communities could be conceptualised in the category where they shared the same culture, that is, their language, socioeconomic status and place of belonging. Besides sociocultural similarities, they also shared the border folklore and, above all, a collective hostility to the border institutions and a preparedness to take them on. Their enforced co-operation had much to do with how border dwellers sought to exploit the new opportunities that offered themselves. The local specificity of the Punjab border created the conditions in which the borderland society adapted and acted, and in that real sense, this volume explains the limits of exclusive nation-building in an inclusive regional setting.

How does the saga of the Punjab boundary expand our understanding of regions that are subject to arbitrarily drawn boundary lines, which are frequently the product of territorial partitions that separate people of the same culture and community group? As this book will show, much of the history of post-independence interactions across the Punjab border was cognisant of navigating local geographies and the distinct advantage of the linkages and collaborations pre-dating Partition. While many people crossed the border to simply visit contacts, to go to the market, to attend festivals and to search for work, the movements were mostly for the everyday practices of unofficial trade, which was criminalised by the state as smuggling and transgression.

This book reveals smuggling blended the parted borderland society and formed the most enduring basis of everyday cross-border interplays that sustained long after Partition. It was an activity participated in eagerly by all



levels of society, and the local populace on both sides of the boundary often sympathised with the border-crossers. Continuing cross-border interactions in the context of the right to trans-border trade and, most importantly, on a perceived claim of being as border residents forged a sense of ‘borderland’, straddling an international boundary. As the findings of this book will reveal, local histories and the Punjabi border ballads bespeak a spirit of mutual fraternity that did not yet articulate the nationalist rhetoric, whereas the minute details of border shootings, heroic escapes and the vast discoveries of gold were passed down from one generation to another. Their popular accounts and the recital of border songs describe how their lives were shaped by the borderland milieu and how they responded to the volatile situations they faced at the margin of the state and society. In the late 1980s, the aftermath of the Sikh militancy served as a fitting movement to end an initial history of smuggling along the Punjab border. This also reflects how many border dwellers interpreted this period of fencing the border, which is most immediate in their responses and memories. In this sense, the term ‘borderland’ is a region where everyday life is shaped by proximity to an international border.<sup>40</sup> This book uses border and borderland interchangeably to refer to the place or region.

Although unauthorised trade is labelled as ‘smuggling’ by the state, it is a way of life for locals at the border.<sup>41</sup> Flynn asserts that ‘although border residents are fully aware that according to state laws it is illegal for them to sneak goods around the customs post, they do not regard it as morally wrong’.<sup>42</sup> This study focuses on the dynamics of state-defined ‘smuggling’ within the South Asian context.<sup>43</sup> In the police records, smuggling was described as an ‘anti-social activity’ and an ‘unpatriotic act’, whereas a smuggler sometimes appears as a *goonda*, *badmash*, *chor* or ‘criminal’. In contrast, popular accounts across the Punjab border describe an individual involved in unauthorised cross-border activity as a *blackia*—a generic term related to ‘black market/money’ and for a whole range of operators from local carriers to the city traders, who were involved in smuggling along the Punjab border.

How did the borderland societies encounter the state and nationalist categorisations of their practices, and how did they deal with the legal-illegal divide that pervaded through everyday life? Indeed, examining these conflicting understandings would reveal that everyday life brought borderland people into conflict with social ideals, national ideologies, the statist language about illegality, and power of the state. *The Punjab Borderland* focuses on the actions of low-level bureaucrats and their ambivalent relation to both border people and the state. These locally rooted officials, whom Jones terms the ‘petty sovereigns of governmentality’, who are imbued with the notion that the borderland is ‘an exceptional space’,<sup>44</sup> played a significant role in the production of a ‘bureaucratic discourse’<sup>45</sup> to the process of state formation

and the framing of varied categories of their nationalising projects within an overarching narrative of illegal cross-border activity. The Punjab border bureaucracy, located at a distance from central and higher authorities, had substantial discretionary power at the edge of the state to loosely interpret laws as it saw fit, which in turn brought the border into being not only on the ground but also in the national imagination of the society. While governing practices were avowedly non-discriminatory on paper, they often followed discerning trajectories when practically implemented on the ground. While the focus on the law provides a window into the postcolonial boundary making, it is important to examine both the ideological grammars and the operational aspects of these preventive measures. How did legislation translate and affect the people they aimed to regularise? What happened when certain subaltern lives encountered nationalist practices that were ideologically geared to making a uniform population?

While the state through border bureaucracy attempted to remould the local population into governable citizens, the border dwellers produced counter strategies and histories of their own. This is a theme that this book takes up in detail and hopes to contest much of the received wisdom that, far from being marginal, border communities in Punjab have been active participants in both shaping the boundary and extracting benefits from it. It also shows how the border economy was a marker of upward social mobility for certain people involved and a catalyst for urban regeneration in the region. This volume, thus, traces the Punjab border beyond lines drawn, sometimes locating contraband hubs in the heartlands of the state. Locating the borderland as an in-between space between the metropolis and the hinterland, *The Punjab Borderland* demonstrates spectacular episodes of the border dwellers' collective action of defiance and the spatial relations of the peripheries, towns and cities.

## **Characteristics and Consequences of Smuggling**

Scholarship on the economics of smuggling notes changing circumstances signifying certain goods as contraband at certain times depending on local imperatives and the shifting nature of the border.<sup>46</sup> *The Punjab Borderland* asks the following questions: What was the nature of contraband trade in transit, and how extensive were its activities and effects? Which items were deemed more threatening to the state projects of consolidation than others? How did varying types of actors benefit from different forms of contraband trades? How did they feed into projects of state development of border control and defence? Finally, and most importantly, what light do these practices shine on the early Pakistan state? Answers to these questions have relevance which reaches well beyond Punjab to many other places in the contemporary world where various commodities are contrabanded.

Along the Punjab border, commodities involved in contraband have been truly diverse, ranging from garments to *paan* (betel leaves). The list of contraband included consumer goods that could be acquired much more expensively in Lahore, as well as items like drugs and guns, which were strictly prohibited by India and Pakistan, and merely possessing them was illegal by law. The varied goods were smuggled at certain times, and their mass consumption changed periodically depending on local imperatives. Gold was, however, pre-eminent as a border-crossing item of the contraband commodity that the state viewed with varying degrees of criminality. Virtually, the entirety of gold was destined for India where the black-market price was more than twice the international price.<sup>47</sup> Situating the Punjab border within global bullion network, this volume implies that the coherent structure of smuggling enterprise developed with contraband gold, one of the most ubiquitous commodities in South Asia in the 1950s and the 1960s. In that sense, the transgression of the Punjab border could be usefully examined through the lens of the most important single phenomenon, challenging the integrity of the border and the accumulating criminal capital: gold smuggling. Although centred on a specific commodity in a certain place and a certain population over a limited timeframe, this volume represents an original attempt to situate the Punjab borderland not only as part of the concurrent processes of state-building and the demarcation of the border but also as a field of global, national and local dynamics.

Decolonisation created a new form of criminality, although smuggling in its manifestation of 'capital accumulation' did not emerge suddenly in the wake of Partition. There is evidence of continuities of connections and criminal involvement from the colonial era.<sup>48</sup> In postcolonial South Asia, smuggling is a small but growing topic in histories of the emerging national and regional political economies, though the focus has largely been on the Bengal borderland<sup>49</sup> and the Pakistan–Afghan border.<sup>50</sup> Yet this small historiography, touching on the borders between India and Pakistan, shows clearly that these lines were transgressed in a variety of ways. In his work *Divided Cities* on Lahore and Amritsar, Talbot identifies that the aftermath of 'Partition offered fierce competition for resources in all north Indian cities where there were large amounts of abandoned properties, but the border cities provided additional opportunities for crime'. He accurately asserts that 'this aftermath of Partition rarely finds its way into standard texts'.<sup>51</sup>

Talbot's dismay at the lack of research on border cities continues to resonate. *The Punjab Borderland* investigates how the Partition created a new class of crimes that came to be described as smuggling. Gold smuggling emerged as a global commodity, engagements with global flows of prices and capital. The profiteers of this form of criminality were not only different populations and regions but also transnational rackets. Therefore, an examination of the Punjab

border is long overdue, not only because of the international smuggling scale but also because it influenced the regional marketplaces as well as its role in the economic 'informality' sector as a tool of enabling economic empowerment for some groups involved.<sup>52</sup> This book provides an overview of the practice of the smuggling economy and the nature of its relationship with the state, considering how they depended on each other. It raises the general question of the relationship between contraband trade and the state by explaining how smugglers and advancing borders interacted with the larger structures of the nation-state project. It explores not only an uneasy interplay between the state and borderland communities but also the linkages between non-borderland business interests, subaltern groups, state elite, mafia-like groups and state institutions, arising from the seizing of new profitable opportunities created by post-partition boundaries for criminal enrichment. The book also reveals that the state and non-state actors were closely enmeshed with each other, creating border asymmetries for their gains, and this collusion generated a structured system of contraband enterprise along the Punjab border. It shows how these linkages were socially, ideologically and commercially understood in everyday life in Pakistan. For the influential, some have noted, power emanating from political capital plays a key role in controlling the contraband business.<sup>53</sup> To operate successfully, as we shall describe in the Punjab case, high-profile smugglers depended on a wide range of institutional resources and state patronage.

On another level, Ansari's work on Sindh explains how the squabbles over the fierce competition for resources exacerbated tensions between refugees and locals in Karachi, and how this ongoing strife, which lasted well into the 1950s, created political factionalism linked to the Muhajir issue that resonates to this day in Pakistan.<sup>54</sup> In the case of Lahore, this volume asks: What were the implications of the economy of smuggling for social cohesion and popular empowerment? Could we consider that large smuggling economies reduced tensions between refugees and locals because everyone was involved? Another central question is whether the economies of smuggling played a part in the refugee rehabilitation and brought stability at least for a while to the early Pakistan state. *The Punjab Borderland* will seek to explain how.

To an important extent, nowhere is the importance of 'smuggling narratives' in projects of rule more apparent than in the single episode of the imposition of martial rule in Pakistan in 1958. In October of that year, General Ayub Khan, in a coup, took over the control of the country and addressed the nation. 'I will improve the conditions in Pakistan and I will wipe out prices, black marketing, hoarding, profiteering, corruption, smuggling, and nepotism.'<sup>55</sup> In response to a sustained public outcry for action against 'smugglers' and 'hoarders', who were generally blamed for price increases, the military regime

within weeks raided establishments of 5,000 *sarafas*, seized 280,000 totals of contraband gold and apprehended over 3,000 ‘smugglers’.<sup>56</sup> Surely, the levels of smuggling and its significance were used by Pakistan’s first military regime to criticise politicians and the early state structure. The anti-democratic corruption-dominated discourse that emerged more vigorously in the backdrop of public competition for evacuee property in the early years of Pakistan’s history is the subject of an earlier work by the author.<sup>57</sup>

This book builds on and is a substantial extension of the impact of the distribution of abandoned evacuee properties on the ‘corruption discourse’, leading to high levels of resentment and disillusionment, which were a factor in the 1958 coup. It seeks to link the ‘narrative of smuggling’ with the widely accepted discourse of the weak political institutionalisation in Pakistan, which is often cited as a factor in the drift to authoritarianism.<sup>58</sup> To what extent did the early emergence of a ‘discourse’ on smuggling undermine the democratic faith of ordinary citizens and create conditions for the coup justified by the need to crack down on widespread smuggling, hoarding and corruption? *The Punjab Borderland* hopes to investigate how the first military government’s anti-smuggling drives accordingly became a weapon of first choice against rival politicians and were deployed as a means of manifesting political rivalry, building new alliances and justification for the implementation of draconian law and military courts for vendetta. Archival source limitations have previously prevented historians from investigating these important and least explored features of Pakistan’s history, largely because of the illegality of the subject.

## Sources and Methodology

This is the first study on the Punjab border based on extensive archival research. Its archival material is derived from lesser-known archives, including police first information reports (FIRs) from the border police stations and border incident reports (BIRs) from the Pakistan Rangers (PR) records. This previously unexplored material makes this study part of a new wave of scholarship, one based on ‘local’ primary sources rather than the state ‘official’ documents. Most importantly, this exploration is the first since Partition to make extensive use of the Punjab Police Surveillance Branch records, the Wagah Field Intelligence Unit reports (FIUs), the military court proceedings (MCP) and the Pakistan Land Customs Department (LCD) archive (all housed in Lahore). Taken together, this documentation furnishes valuable insights into the working of everyday interactions of border people and alleged smugglers with border institutions and authorities. The statements of the participants themselves open a unique window on the world of transgression and the government response to control them. The bulk of archival records were produced by state officials in charge of enforcing border policing and customs,

and some of the information produced might have been obtained by coercion. They, therefore, come with their own set of issues concerning veracity and are sometimes clearly embellished accounts and received narratives, representing official notions of law and smuggling. Documents as 'active [and] generative substances', with 'itineraries of their own', in the words of Stoler, need to be read 'against the grain' to recover subaltern consciousness and to balance them with other sources as they not only raise ethical questions but tend to reproduce biases of colonial stereotypes of framing of different groups.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to this vast trove of documents, this book uses several other collections of national and provincial archives, legislative assembly debates, newspapers and court trials. A document analysis of primary material at the Roberts Club Archive (RCA) and the Punjab Secretariat Archive (PSA), Lahore, as well as the National Documentation Centre (NDC), Islamabad, has enabled the gathering of background information of the Punjab border, especially on its demarcation process and border disputes. Moreover, supplementing the 'top-down' perspective of official archives enables us to escape the assumption that borders look 'fluid' at the periphery but 'fixed' from the centre. Newspapers have also provided invaluable sources on the various issues relating to border disputes and the activities occurring at some of the crossing points, which I have managed to study on both sides of the border and beyond. Further, newspapers also furnish material on the state response to the uncontrolled levels of smuggling at the border and the transnational dimension of contraband trades in India and Pakistan. They were read interpretively.

Unravelling the history of smuggling presents a host of challenges. It is difficult to calculate with any precision the size and scope of unauthorised cross-border flows, as the customs seizures, government documents and newspaper accounts represent a fraction of cross-border flows. Official documents are very much part of the state process of image crafting which would help to promote support for more policing. Sometimes they are fragmentary and imprecise. Steedman reminds us of the limitations of the archive. 'You find nothing in the archive but stories caught halfway through: the middle of things, discontinuities.'<sup>60</sup> Readers are, therefore, advised to keep such limitations in mind, and what is presented is a conjectural statistical analysis of smuggling.

Researching smuggling or organised crime is a potentially risky endeavour. Thus, usually researchers use official data, which although extremely valuable does not provide an integrated approach to the topic as it 'ignores the reality of the offenders'.<sup>61</sup> This book, therefore, also uses a wide range of non-archival sources, particularly oral histories, speaking with the borderlanders to build an account of living on the margin of an international border.<sup>62</sup> We shall see how the Punjabi borderland communities expressed their own views on

border activity as part of what Díaz has termed as a ‘moral economy of smuggling’,<sup>63</sup> whereas Duffy refers to it as a ‘geographical morality’.<sup>64</sup> This book also draws useful information from local vernacular archival material, autobiographies, as well as popular low-brow writing, border ballads, folktales and lyrics, which are the locally rooted aspects of the repertoire.

I conducted most of the interviews in close vicinity of and within sight of the Punjab border. These were mostly people who regularly crossed the border. These interviews were conducted on a series of occasions (between December 2018 and February 2019; and January–March 2020) and, as free-flowing conversations with the participants, are part of an ethnographic study on the border communities in the selected localities. The fieldwork sites, as well as the focus on the Punjab border itself, were chosen not only to keep the regional balance in mind but crucially by considering the availability of archival sources, contacts, networks and linguistic skills. The interviews were almost exclusively conducted in Punjabi. Such limitations and skills are sometimes essential to tackle a difficult fieldwork topic such as the criminal economy.<sup>65</sup>

Information was also collected through participant observation, conversations and interviews with key informants: journalists, local academics, lawyers, civil servants (often retired), FIU officials, PR and police personnel and minor politicians. I minimised risks by anonymising the names of informants. Given the highly sensitive nature of smuggling issues, there is no simple research practice that can satisfy all these concerns. It is within this context that our analysis here only offers some partial explanation of the complex nature of smuggling in the Punjab borderland. The source material presented here provides the first primary and representative information on the contraband trade and its operators as some to come directly from the narratives of smugglers interviewed.

The focus of the study is a timeframe (1947–1987) to hold several key variables constant to provide a sense of how freshly drawn up territorial borders on maps were translated into practice on the ground. This period of four decades is interesting precisely because, despite the strained political environment that had developed between India and Pakistan in the wake of 1965 war, the interaction between the Punjab borderland communities actively continued on both sides of the border. It was only in the wake of the 1980s Sikh militancy in Indian Punjab that the border began to play a much stronger representative role in marking out the differences between India and Pakistan. Ultimately, 1987 witnessed the construction of the first barricade on a segment of the Punjab border, which was to culminate in the ‘final enclosure’. While the physical focus of this exploration is Punjab, radials of the story occasionally penetrate the border and reach beyond the subcontinent to Dubai, Birmingham, Zurich, Hong Kong and Beirut, from where most of

the illicit gold was smuggled into South Asia. The Punjab borderland could be seen, therefore, as a swirling maelstrom of communities, commodities and landscapes, maintaining links outside of it at the same time.

## **Overview of the Chapters**

This book's organisation is a mixture of the thematic and the chronologic. It is divided into seven chapters, all of which centre on one main theme: the enormous consequences of Partition for Punjab and independent Pakistan. The opening chapter contextualises the area of study, an account of the demarcation of the post-partition Punjab boundary between India and Pakistan, explaining how a local colonial space was transformed into an international one. Questioning the oft-repeated narrative of an increasingly 'hard' Punjab border and a 'soft' Bengal border, this chapter seeks to revise a stock of conventional wisdom and to offer a more nuanced account of the Punjab border as porous and fragile up until the 1980s. It was in that testing and contesting of the emerging boundary, Chapter 2 explains, while being mapped physically, that the border was crossed by a variety of commodities, people and contrabanders. It also examines the interplays between the everyday lives and the locally rooted state working in the borderland. It reflects on how the regional and the national, the self and the other, had to be constructed, as opposed to being already manifest.

Chapter 3 shifts focus to the relationship between the border and cross-border trade, representing how smuggling played a catalytical role in the development of the contraband economics of the border cities of Lahore and Amritsar. It looks at the empirical contours of the economy of smuggling and shows how contraband found its role both as a profit-making enterprise and as a project of resistance. It examines the nature, practice and extent of various contraband trades channelled between the cities and reveals how these flows played a role in a thriving market for consumption and socioeconomic improvement for involved subaltern groups. To broaden the analysis, Chapter 4 takes the case of a single contraband commodity, gold, and situates it within the wider context of smuggling at global scales. It shows how decolonisation spurred a vibrant transnational trade in bullion smuggling and the Punjab border became a node of these flows. How large and interrelated was gold smuggling? What could its flows tell us about the border landscape and smuggling dynamic? How did the illicit global gold transit bring the Wagah–Attari crossing into a direct link with the transnational flows, global networks and the underworld? The case of bullion smuggling reveals the wider networks and geographic distribution of contraband economy, and its linkages with the state apparatus on both sides of the border, which has drawn little critical attention from historians.



Taking the Punjab border as an engine of prospects and fluid economic space, Chapter 5 outlines the itinerant economic opportunities the border offered to the local population. It traces the postcolonial criminalisation of the Punjab borderland to demonstrate that the process was inextricably linked to the creation of the border, and the resultant concerns of local-level bureaucracy on the ground. It traces, in particular, the borderland society's social organisation and ethnic constitution, focusing on how the functioning of *biraderi* networks, mutual benefit and trust, as well as knowledge of local geographies and the pre-partition linkages, played a key part in cross-border materialities. Ultimately, the chapter raises the question of whether it is possible to discern the emergence of a new borderland elite, which had grown rich in seizing of an opportunity of smuggling.

Chapter 6 provides a varied insight into questions that are central to understanding the inner working of the state. How did the state 'see' the cross-border crime? What surveillance and enforcement were used by the state to stop the contraband trades? What was the role of technology on both sides of the border? What was the remit and roles of border forces and judicial systems? The chapter also assesses how smuggling became mixed up with politics, especially during Ayub's Pakistan in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Bringing the analysis up to the 1980s, the final chapter explores the material, political and economic reconfiguration of the border in the wake of Sikh militancy in Indian Punjab, which turned the borderland into a militarily contested landscape of conflict that profoundly affected the border people and their contraband trade. The chapter tackles the question of how the pre-existing smuggling networks ultimately became state agents and played a vanguard role in arms smuggling into India with the full approval of the border institutions, exposing the contribution of contraband drugs in financing the Sikh militancy. Finally, it shows how effectively India launched a high-profile border control campaign that ultimately coalesced into the erection of fencing in the late 1980s, marking the beginning of the end of the porous border. The conclusion revisits the major themes of the book and relates them to some recent research on Pakistan studies and borderlands elsewhere, especially other parts of South Asia.

*The Punjab Borderland* speaks directly to historians in both its intellectual scope and its archival significance. The way the legacies of Partition impinge on the present is a recurring theme within this volume. It offers readers compelling insights into how the new international boundary between India and Pakistan was shaped and tapped. Contraband, consumption, clan, caste, class and state-building all weave together in this evolving socioeconomic history of the borderland from the late 1940s to the aftermath of the 1980s Sikh militancy. It also seeks to engage with the burgeoning historiography

of borderland studies by offering the first monograph-length discovery of the Punjab borderland society. The book is useful to readers interested in conceptualising social spaces and understanding social change in South Asia, by setting out a historically informed insight into the past that has a direct bearing on the present.

## Notes

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