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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Lahore-Amritsar Borderland and Indo-Pakistan Relations during the Early Postcolonial Period

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Abstract

This article examines the interaction of events in the Lahore and Amritsar borderland with the wider course of Indo-Pakistan relations in the early postindependence period. Its findings reveal the ways in which events in this sensitive borderland reflected, symbolized, and influenced wider Indo-Pakistan relations. The examination focuses on the 1951 War Scare and the Cricket Diplomacy four years later. In a foretaste of the use of cricket in 2004–2005 to normalize relations, the India-Pakistan Test Series of January–February 1955 provided an occasion for opening the Wagah border crossing. Here was evidence that despite the human tragedies surrounding Partition, the region of the Punjab could act as a bridge between India and Pakistan.

Keywords: Lahore; Amritsar; Indo-Pakistan relations

Introduction

On July 23, 1951, Pakistan's border city of Lahore was enveloped in darkness during a two-hour practice blackout. Police squads and Air Raid Precautions (ARP) workers patrolled the streets to enforce it. During the following weeks as tension between India and Pakistan increased over the Kashmir dispute, sixty-three first aid training centers were opened, including twelve exclusively for women. Ten days after the fourth anniversary of Pakistan's independence, a mock air attack formed part of a spectacular ARP display in the city.[1]

Less than three and a half years later a Test Match between India and Pakistan at Lahore's Bagh-i-Jinnah stadium drew large cross-border crowds. On the two opening days (January 29 and 30), the ground was packed with forty thousand spectators an hour before the first ball was bowled. The Pakistan daily *Dawn* reported that

[1] *Civil and Military Gazette* (August 26, 1951).

twenty-two thousand Indians, half of whom were Sikhs, visited Lahore during the match.[2] A hundred buses had been commissioned to carry visitors from the Wagah border crossing. *Dawn* gave prominence to a story about two hundred Indian high schoolgirls who entered Pakistan from Wagah on the morning of February 2 and "roamed about the city unescorted in small batches."[3]

These contrasting events reveal the huge impact of changes in Indo-Pakistan relations on daily life in the border city of Lahore. The response to the Test Match in Lahore raises the question, Could the border areas not only reflect underlying Indo-Pakistan tensions, but also through people-to-people contact, improve bilateral relations. While there is extensive literature on Indo-Pakistan relations in the early postindependence period, this has focused on issues such as the conflict over Kashmir and the legacies arising from disputes over the division of assets at the time of Partition.[4]

Joya Chatterji has produced a more nuanced understanding that suggests Indian and Pakistani attempts to deal with Partition-related mass migration produced a common statecraft that resulted in a "partial secularization" of bilateral relations.[5] From evidence from the recovery of abducted women to discussions about evacuee property, this article adds the attempts to demarcate the border itself in the shifting riverscapes of creeks, islets, and salt flats in the Ganges Delta, or in the changing course of the Ravi River in the Punjab. The fluctuating boundary in the latter region was still being aerially mapped and discussed in monthly meetings of the Public Works Departments of Pakistan and India, a decade after independence.[6] "The Radcliffe Boundary Commission," Ilyas Chattha astutely remarks, "had not given any thought to the possibility of rivers changing course."[7] Yet during the post-Partition decade, the Ravi's change of course had meant that over eighteen thousand acres of land in twenty-two villages had moved into Pakistani territory while "a portion" of sixteen thousand acres "had come over to India."[8] The alignment of the border in disputed areas was still being discussed at foreign minister level a full decade after independence.[9] The environmental dimension of the Punjab border's impact on Indo-Pakistan relations has scarcely been explored.

[2] *Dawn* (February 4, 1955).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Standard works include, for example, Paul H Kreisberg, and Dennis Kux, eds., *India and Pakistan: The First Fifty Years* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999); T. V. Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Paul M. McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945–1965* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Rakesh Ankit, *The Kashmir Conflict: From Empire to Cold War, 1945–66* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[5] Joya Chatterji, "Secularization and Partition Emergencies: Deep Diplomacy in South Asia," *Economic and Political Weekly* 48, no. 50 (December 14, 2013): 42.

[6] Ilyas Chattha, *The Punjab Borderland: Mobility, Materiality and Militancy, 1947–1987* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 40.

[7] Ibid, 39.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid, 40.

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When a border-centric view of the early interactions of the Indian and Pakistani states is considered at all, it is in terms of disputes over natural water resources,[10] or in terms of incursions, or skirmishes between border security forces.[11] Both national governments ensured that these never escalated, although the rhetoric of a cross-border threat could be turned to wider propaganda purposes.

It is important, however, to recognize from the outset that the borderlands and their populations were not passive bystanders of the postcolonial state's symbolic and physical display of power. Ilyas Chattha reveals through his groundbreaking study that there were constant cross-border flows of people and goods regardless of the attempts of the Indian and Pakistani governments to inscribe their sovereignty on it. Such interactions were described as a danger "to national security" and fed into public narratives of "Indian" or "Pakistani spies."[12] These were usually people pursuing their livelihoods, keeping up contacts that predated Partition, or profiting from the opportunities for "illicit" trade. To fully appreciate how Punjab border dwellers were able to exploit the new boundary for personal gain, it is necessary to be aware of the ties between communities that existed before the Radcliffe line separated the inhabitants on either side of the Wagah-Attari boundary. But first, we need to locate the Punjab case study in the wider academic literature on borderlands.

Historiography

During the past two decades, borderlands have increasingly become the topic of scholarship. There have been comparative studies,[13] including works on borders in North America,[14] Latin America,[15] Ireland,[16] Africa,[17] and Southeast Asia.[18] A key theme, which has emerged, is an awareness of the fluid and porous nature of borders rather than a perception of them as impervious and enclosing. Accompanying this approach has been the understanding that people living in these regions are not

[10] D. Haines, *Rivers Divided Indus Basin Waters in the Making of India and Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[11] I. Talbot, *Divided Cities: Partition and Its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar, 1947–1957* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 68–69.

[12] Chattha, *The Punjab Borderland*, 46.

[13] M. Baud and W. Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 211–42

[14] O. J. Martinez, *Border People: Life and Society in the US-Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994).

[15] R. B. Galemba, *Contraband Corridor: Making a Living at the Mexico-Guatemala Border* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

[16] P. Duffy, "Continuity and Change in the Border Landscapes," in *The Debatable Land: Ireland's Border Counties*, ed., B. S. Turner (Downpatrick: Ulster Historical Trust, 2002), 1–30; C. Nash and B. Reid, *Partitioned Lives: The Irish Borderland* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[17] M. Doevenspeck, "Constructing the Border from Below: Narratives from the Congolese-Rwandan State Boundary," *Political Geography* 30, no. 3 (2011): 129–42; P. Nugent, "Border Towns and Cities in Comparative Perspective," in *A Companion to Border Studies*, eds., M. Wilson and H. Donnan (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 557–72; M. Foucher, "African Borders: Putting Paid to a Myth," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 35, no. 2 (2020): 287–306.

[18] P. Taylor, *Cham Muslims of the Mekong Delta: Place and Mobility in the Cosmopolitan Periphery* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007); S. Turner, C. Bonnin, and J. Michaud, *Frontier Livelihoods: Hmong in the Sino-Vietnamese Borderlands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).

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solely passive victims of state agency, but that boundary-making processes provide opportunities and resources. Within the field of borderland studies, a subgenre of frontier urbanism has also emerged with emphasis on the "mutually-embedded relationships of border towns."[19] Historians, anthropologists, and political geographers have all contributed to the growing body of literature that has become institutionalized in the *Journal of Borderland Studies*.

The work on South Asia has been equally rich and extensive in scope. Scholarship on the Bengal/Bangladesh borderland was pioneered by Willem Van Schendel.[20] His work revealed similarities with case studies in other parts of the world such as the prevalence of illegal border crossing, contraband trade, and the extent to which cultural linkages endure when populations are divided by new national boundaries. These aspects have recently been uncovered in studies of the Burma-Pakistan-India borderlands,[21] and the Indo-Bangladesh border.[22]

Accounts of the Indo-Pakistan borders in the west of the Subcontinent have focused primarily on security concerns arising from international boundary disputes that had their origins in colonial cartography.[23] There were also studies of the performance of statehood on the Indo-Pakistan border in the Punjab, both through theatrical displays at Wagah[24] and by surveillance regimes.[25] This scholarly emphasis reflected the notion that the Punjab borderland was a "hard" border, unlike its Bengal counterpart. Ilyas Chattha's recent study has revised this conceptualization. It revealed that "everyday cross-border interplays" were sustained long after Partition, particularly through illicit trade. This was labeled as "smuggling" by the state and deemed an "unpatriotic act," but it was a way of life for many border dwellers.[26] His examination not only reveals that the Punjab border was porous up until the 1980s era of Sikh militancy, but that the contraband trade impacted hugely on the early post-Partition economic recovery of Lahore.[27]

[19] I. Soi and P. Nugent, "Peripheral Urbanism: Border Towns and Twin Towns in Africa," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 32, no. 4 (2017): 535–56.

[20] W. Van Schendel, "Easy Come, Easy Go: Smugglers on the Ganges," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 23, no. 2 (1993): 189–223; W. Van Schendel, *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia* (London: Anthem, 2005).

[21] R. Mazumdar, "Illegal Border Crossers and Unruly Citizens: Burma-Pakistan-Indian Borderlands from the Nineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Centuries," *Modern Asian Studies* 53, no. 4 (2019): 1144–82.

[22] S. Ghose, "Chor, Police and Cattle: The Political Economies of Bovine Value in the Indo-Bangladesh Borderlands," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, no. 6 (2019): 1108–24.

[23] S. M. Ali, *The Fearful State: Power, People and Internal Wars in South Asia* (London: Zed Cooks Ltd, 1993); T. V. Paul, ed., *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005); L. Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of the Punjab* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2009); V. Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); S. Ganguly, *Deadly Impasse: Kashmir and Indo-Pakistani Relations at the Dawn of the New Century* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[24] N. K. Purewal and V. S. Kalra, "The Strut of the Peacocks: Partition, Travel and the Indo-Pakistan Border," in *Travel Worlds: Journeys in Contemporary Cultural Politics*, eds., R. Kaur and J. Hutnyk (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999), 54–68.

[25] Stephen Alter, *Amritsar to Lahore: A Journey across the India-Pakistan Border* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

[26] Chattha, 9.

[27] Ibid, 92–125.

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This article builds on both Ilyas Chattha's recent work and my earlier findings in the volume *Divided Cities* on Lahore and Amritsar.[28] While Chattha provides a social history of the borderland, I am primarily concerned in this article, first, with the extent to which national tensions impacted the borderland cities; second, the ways in which anxieties at the border through press coverage fed into wider perceptions of Indo-Pakistan relations; and third, the possibilities for reducing state-level mistrust that people-to-people contact in the borderland provided. Before turning to these issues, it is necessary to set them within their colonial historical context.

Colonial-Era Lahore and Amritsar and the Aftermath of Partition

Work on African borderlands has argued that where communities have sociocultural similarities and sense of belonging, cross-border integration is likely to continue even when they are separated by new boundary lines.[29] Ilyas Chattha has revealed similar processes at work among the Punjab pastoralist borderland communities and the urban inhabitants of Lahore and Amritsar. Smuggled goods were brought over the border by local carriers from villages that straddled the border and sold in "Indian bazaars" that helped the development of a migrant entrepreneurial class in Lahore.

The horrors of Partition-related violence in the two cities and their surrounding areas can obscure the fact that the populations of Lahore and Amritsar possessed long-term commercial and cultural interlinkages. Their historical existence in the "twin cities" gave them features of what C. S. Momoh has conceptualized as a "maximal border" in which the dividing lines of national boundaries are honeycombed by shared affective ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties underpinned by historical commercial connections.[30] The local economies of Amritsar and Lahore had been connected in the precolonial era, but the advent of the railway in the 1860s drew the cities together more closely than ever before. Trains daily transported a thousand passengers between them for commerce, education, and entertainment. Lahore's Bhati Gate and Mcleod Road cinemas regularly drew customers from Amritsar seeking an evening of pleasure just an hour's train journey from home. The travel was affordable—even at the end of the colonial era the rail fare was only nine cents. Mian Miraj Din's Crown Bus Company, which ran a regular service from Amritsar to its terminus in Brandreth Road, Lahore, charged even less—just six cents.[31] Businessmen and traders took advantage of the cheap travel to keep a home in one city and an office in the other. The two cities were stereotypically termed "twins," because of their close commercial and cultural links.

The railways also connected Lahore and Amritsar to regional, national, and global trading networks. Goods were carried from the Badami Bagh freight station in Lahore for distribution elsewhere in the region and the 760-mile journey to the port of Karachi for export. Lahore was the headquarters of the North Western Railway with

[28] Talbot, *Divided Cities*.

[29] A. I. Asiwaju, "The Conceptual Framework," in *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884–1984*, ed. A. I. Asiwaju (London: Hurst, 1985), 4.

[30] C. S. Momoh, "A Critique of Borderland Theories," in *Borderlands in Africa A Multidisciplinary and Comparative Focus on Nigeria and West Africa*, eds., A.I. Asiwaju and P. O. Adeniyi (Lagos: University of Lagos Press, 1989), 51–63.

[31] Talbot *Divided Cities*, 5.

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its vast engineering repair workshops on a one thousand–acre site at Moghalpura on the eastern edge of the city.[32] Wheat from Amritsar's thriving Victoria Jubilee Grain Market was exported globally from the port of Karachi. Amritsar was also the north Indian distribution center for European cotton and woolen textiles. These were sent to Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.[33] The pashmina shawl industry also provided the city with international links. These trading ties were to be terminated by the new international boundary, which ran almost equidistant from the two cities. During the 1950s, Amritsar was to stagnate, despite the importance of the Golden Temple for the Sikh community.[34] Transport links with Bombay were very poor in comparison with those formerly with Karachi. The British manager of Lloyds Bank in Amritsar lamented in May 1949 that he had lost ten *lakhs* of business to Bombay.[35]

During the colonial era, significant minority populations grew up in both cities. Indeed, the Muslim population of Amritsar expanded so much that it only just fell short of 50 percent of the total inhabitants although the city's surrounding areas were overwhelming Sikh. Weavers accounted for approximately half the Muslim population.[36] They worked initially in the pashmina shawl industry; however, when its trade declined, they turned their hand to carpet weaving. Hindu Marwaris, Aroras, and Banias dominated Amritsar's trade and owned most textile factories.

The Hindus and Sikhs in Lahore were an extremely wealthy minority who controlled banking and commerce, were preponderant in the city's many colleges, and owned most of the shops in its teeming bazaars. They also owned four-fifths of Lahore's factories and indeed had pioneered the development of the pharmaceutical and engineering industries. They paid seven-tenths of the urban taxes in the Punjab's provincial capital.[37] It was on this basis that Congress representations to the British Boundary Commission claimed that Lahore should be included in India, even though non-Muslims accounted for under 40 percent of the total population.[38] The Muslim League counterargued that the whole of the Amritsar district should be included in Pakistan.

The cities became contested spaces because of their wealth and political significance. The political uncertainties at the end of colonial rule led to violence that was a feature of everyday life. The decision to partition the Punjab when India was divided was an agreement designed to halt the violence. However, what became known as the 3 June Partition Plan, rather than resolving community tensions, opened the floodgates to massacres not just in Lahore and Amritsar but throughout the Punjab region and beyond.

Poorer minority members, or those who still hoped that the Boundary Commission dice would roll in their favor, stayed put in both Lahore and Amritsar. New urban frontiers were established as Muslim enclaves grew up in Amritsar in such areas as

[32] Ian Talbot and Tahir Kamran, *Lahore in the Time of the Raj* (Gurgaon, India: Penguin Viking, 2016), 27.
[33] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 8.
[34] Ibid, 68.
[35] Ibid, 85.
[36] Ibid, 17.
[37] Ibid, 15.
[38] Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani, *Sikh Nationalism: From a Dominant Minority to an Ethno-Religious Diaspora* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 101.

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Sharifpura, where the Muslim population increased fourfold in the closing months of British rule.[39] Ten thousand Hindus remained in Lahore. The enclaves in both cities took on the appearance of barricaded settlements.[40] They were to fall once the British had departed. Five hundred people were killed when the Muslim enclave of Katra Karam Singh in Amritsar was overrun. The last Muslim enclave in the walled city at Bhagtanwala Gate was abandoned on August 13.[41] But prior to this, the enclaves gave an illusion of safety for those who did not have the luxury of anticipatory flight.

The Radcliffe Boundary Award, which was published two days after independence, drew the new Indo-Pakistan border in the Punjab at the small Wagah Canal, almost equidistant from the two cities of Lahore and Amritsar. The colonial neighbors were now transformed into precarious border cities that had to rebuild areas that had been razed following the weeks of violence that preceded Partition. Most of the six thousand houses in the walled city of Lahore had been damaged; ten thousand buildings lay in ruins in Amritsar.[42] The two cities also had to—at least temporarily—house large numbers of refugees that in a two-way chaotic flight swept over the new international border. Approximately ten million Punjabis were uprooted in the Partition violence that created the largest mass migration in the twentieth century.[43] There were a million refugees in Lahore alone in April 1948, two-fifths of whom were housed in camps.

Refugee rehabilitation in Amritsar was hampered by the administrative chaos in the new Indian Punjab Province, which had to build up from scratch a capital and secretariat headquarters. It was some weeks before the East Punjab government could communicate with New Delhi except through Lahore. Amritsar also had less and poorer-quality abandoned property than Lahore in which refugees could be housed. This reflected the relative poverty of the pre-Partition Muslim artisanal community of Amritsar compared with the commercial and professional Hindu and Sikh elites in Lahore.

Poor housing along with border security fears played a part in the desire of wealthier Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan to move on from Amritsar to other places in East Punjab such as Ludhiana and Jullundur and even as far afield as Delhi and Bombay. Amritsar's peripheral position was further underlined by the temporary cessation of rail links with Delhi and the United Provinces. Supply chain problems resulted in coal shortages that hit Amritsar's industry for several months in mid-1949.[44]

The loss of markets and labor were further handicaps. Labor shortages in the textile industry, where over 50 percent of the skilled labor force had been Muslim, compounded Amritsar's geographical disadvantages. Another drawback, as we shall

[39] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 43.

[40] Zain ul Abideen, who was fifteen at the time and lived near Mohalla Katra Haikiman in Amritsar, has recalled, "Since our street was linked with a host of other streets, the number of iron gates installed all around our street was eight. At night those gates used to be closed to ensure safety to the residents of the vicinity." Ibid.

[41] Ibid, 48.

[42] Ibid, 109.

[43] Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 91.

[44] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 86.

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see shortly, was its population's response to the periodic invasion scares, and fears of spies and saboteurs. While Amritsar's population grew more slowly than the rest of India's in the decades after partition, Lahore's expanded at twice the rate of Pakistan's.[45]

As early as 1951, over 43 percent of its population were migrants—at that time these were specifically Partition-related migrants.[46] Lahore's administrative importance (it remained the capital of the Punjab and, after the introduction of One Unit Scheme in 1955, was the capital of West Pakistan) and economic opportunities attracted upper-class and professional migrants. The city also provided good opportunities for traders and artisans from what had become Indian Punjab. Kashmiri weavers relocated from Amritsar to Lahore, where many had business and kinship ties dating from the colonial era. The Amritsari Muslim refugee population not surprisingly became the most visible refugee community in the city. Food stalls, clothes shops, and tailors catered to nonlocal tastes. When goods were unavailable through formal channels, or were out of the price range of consumers, they were spirited across the new international border.

Spatial separation between refugees and locals was, however, never complete.[47] It became less marked the higher up the social scale one moved. Even Urdu-speaking refugees in Lahore did not feel entirely out of place. Urdu from 1854 had been the official language in the Punjab, replacing Persian and relegating its native tongue to domestic use.[48] It was Urdu-speaking migrants who played a key role in the development of Lahore's "Indian Bazaars." The locality that became known as "Indian Galli" developed not only as a city but also as a regional trade hub to meet consumer demand for such items as cosmetics, spices, clothing, tea, and *paan* (betel leaf, nut, lime and other ingredients).[49] Demand for *paan* came from the migrant population cut off from Indian supplies by state regulation of the trade in *paan* commodities.

Lahore and Amritsar as Spaces of Intense National Anxiety

When frontiers divide hostile neighbors, they become "spaces of intense national anxiety."[50] During the 1950s, Lahore and Amritsar were frequently at the center of security concerns. There were periodic invasion scares, and fears of spies and saboteurs. Politicians and civic leaders called for the arming of citizens. This backdrop, which was widely reported in the press, contributed to the sense of mistrust and increasing distance between the neighboring Indian and Pakistan states. At the same time, tensions in the state-level relationship over the issues of accession of Hyderabad and Kashmir and the ongoing disputes over the division of assets, recovery of abducted women, and evacuee compensation particularly affected Lahore

[45] Ibid, 68.

[46] Ibid, 154.

[47] Mohammad Waseem, "Partition, Migration and Assimilation: A Comparative Study of Pakistani Punjab," in *Region and Partition: Bengal Punjab and the Partition of the Subcontinent,* eds., Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 203–28.

[48] Talbot and Kamran, 35; Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[49] Chattha, *The Punjab Borderland*, 119.

[50] Van Schendel, *The Bengal Borderland*, 334.

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and Amritsar because of their border locations.[51] The front-line existence of Lahore has already been mentioned with respect to the 1951 War Scare.

The transformation of Lahore and Amritsar into border cities meant that they were vulnerable to unlawful incursion in peacetime. There were several incursions into the Amritsar district from Pakistan in the early weeks of independence.[52] Cattle raiders took advantage of the breakdown in law and order to engage in this time-honored Punjabi activity. Cattle theft remained high on the agenda of joint border police meetings as late as the mid-1950s. A meeting held in June 1955, for example, discussed fifty-six cases of cattle theft.[53] More serious episodes of incursions across a still-porous border involved the activities of armed guards and Muslim League National Guards. Loot and the desire to pay off old scores motivated these episodes.[54]

Sardar Bahadar Narendra Singh, the deputy commissioner of Amritsar, met his Lahore counterpart, Zaffar-ul Hasan, on November 12, 1947 to discuss the situation. Officers from the border police stations also attended. A program of joint touring was agreed upon, with severe punishments for incursions and for the prompt return of stolen goods and animals.[55] Narendra Singh was sufficiently confident in the measures put in place to declare that there was no more fear of major raids.[56] Cooperation and joint agreements at a local level are further evidence for Joya Chatterji's "secularization" of bilateral relations argument in discussions of the "deep diplomacy" attendant on Partition's legacies.

Despite Narendra Singh's confidence, unlawful incursions continued well into 1948. During that year, a total of 264 border raids were recorded in the Amritsar district.[57] The two deputy commissioners met again for six hours on September 2, 1948 to discuss border security following the death of some Pakistani policemen who had been apprehended on the India side of the border.[58] The bad blood arising from the incident led to eight hours of exchange of fire between the Amritsar and Pakistan Border Police on September 18.[59] While such isolated incidents began to decline, there were exchanges of police firing, as late as November 1952, including mortars at the border village of Daoke, a mere twenty-five miles from Amritsar.[60] The anxieties such incidents aroused in the city were intensified by press reports that the police had apprehended Muslims dressed as Hindus who had crossed the border without permits.[61] There were similar spy stories in Lahore. On September 23, 1950, the story circulated that when the police raided the house of a well-known *goonda* (criminal) Sheikh Jalal in the former Hindu locality of Gowal Mandi, they arrested Manohar Lal, who did not have a permit to enter the country from India. He was

[51] On the state level disputes see, Talbot and Singh, *The Partition of India*, 156–61.
[52] *Tribune* (November, 3, 5, 1947).
[53] *Dawn* (July, 15, 1955).
[54] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, s69.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] *Statesman Weekly* (March, 22, 1952).
[58] *Tribune* (September, 4, 1948).
[59] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 69.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid; *Tribune* (October, 20, 1948).

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alleged to have regularly done this "to spy for the Indian Union."[62] Here was local "evidence" for the Pakistani national narrative that India had never accepted Partition and was seeking to undermine Pakistan.

Within weeks of independence, politicians in both the Indian and Pakistan Punjab were calling for the arming of citizens in the borderland. During a debate in the November 1947 East Punjab Assembly Budget Session, Home Minister Sardar Swaran Singh declared that a gun should be in "every deserving hand in the East Punjab so that every Punjabee acts as a defender of this land of ours and uses his gun for protecting the honor of our sisters and daughters."[63] Just under a month earlier, the first rifle club had indeed been formed in Amritsar to provide military training.[64] A few days later, the Amritsar Hindu Mahasabha adopted a resolution demanding compulsory military training; it also declared that in view of the district's strategic importance, "its people should be fully armed."[65] As tensions mounted between India and Pakistan following the 1950 communal riots in West and East Bengal and parts of Uttar Pradesh (UP), the former Lahore resident and Punjab chief minister Lala Bhim Sachar called for the arming of Amritsar's citizens.[66]

There were similar developments in Lahore. Several rifle clubs were established.[67] Gun licenses and weapons were in demand. American-style single- and double-barrel guns were sold at Rs. 800 and Rs. 500 million, respectively.[68] Citizens were enrolled in the National Guards. Even the Khaksar movement, which had been under a cloud because of its opposition to the Pakistan movement, was given pride of place in public displays of drilling in Lahore during the tension with India in July 1951. Female students were trained in parade and rifle shooting and publicly demonstrated these skills during the tense period in Pakistan's relations with India early in 1950.[69]

Despite the increasing visibility of security measures, Amritsar's population remained prone to rumors and panics whenever national tensions increased between India and Pakistan. When Indian troops invaded Hyderabad in September 1948, a British observer reported that "thousands of Hindus poured out of the city by train and road and that such an exodus was becoming a fairly regular event whenever relations with Pakistan deteriorate."[70] Spy stories and rumors even led to suspicion falling on Europeans. Mr. Stevens, the manager of the Oriental Carpet Factory at Chheharta on the outskirts of Amritsar, had his letters opened and was interrogated by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) because he spoke in French at home and on the telephone. The British manager of the Chartered Bank in Amritsar was also apparently under suspicion in this instance for holding pro-Pakistan views.[71]

During the summer of 1951 Indo-Pakistan tensions worsened. This was the time of the publication of and the United Nations (UN) Security Council vote on the UN

[62] Talbot, *Divided Cities* ft. 16, 100; *Civil and Military Gazette* (September, 26, 1950).
[63] Ibid, 70; *Tribune* (November 5, 1947).
[64] Ibid, 70; *Tribune* (October 7, 1947).
[65] Ibid, 70; *Tribune* (October 17, 1947).
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, 71.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid; *Civil and Military Gazette* (February 26, 1950).
[70] Report by E. G. Willan, December 17, 1948, DO 35/3181 East Punjab Affairs, TNA, Kew.
[71] Ibid.

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mediator Dr. Frank Graham's report on Kashmir. From the beginning of the year, there had been demonstrations in Lahore in favor of Kashmiri self-determination. The city's significant pre-independence Kashmiri population had been swelled by Kashmiris who had fled from Amritsar. Many settled in the former Hindu localities of Gowal Mandi and Nisbit Road. Hatim A Alavi, Pakistan's delegate to the UN General Assembly had declared on January 11 that "to lose Kashmir would be to lose Pakistan."[72] He declaimed that the nation should now get ready to "stagger the world" with complete self-sacrifice in the cause of the freedom of Kashmir and Pakistan.[73] As Indian troops began to mass along the international border, the Punjab prime minister, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, looking back on events on the Russian front during the Second World War, declared on July 18 that "Punjabis generally and citizens of Lahore in particular give assurance to their fellow brothers in Pakistan that should the moment come, each village, street and home of our land shall prove a Stalingrad which will point the way to the fate of Berlin."[74] Two days later, peace broke out between Daultana and his intense political rival, the Nawab of Mamdot, when the latter joined the prime minister at the inauguration of Lahore's Civil Defense Body. Shortly afterwards, the Punjab National Calamities Prevention and Relief Ordinance was introduced. The measure made no direct reference to an emergency arising from war. But its hurried appearance coincided with the mounting tension over Kashmir. The Ordinance empowered a relief commissioner to evacuate the population; to requisition or demolish various buildings; to conscript labor; and to require residents of the affected areas to declare surplus stocks of food, firewood, and clothing for use.[75]

Preparations in the event of conflict with India proceeded apace. The mayor of Lahore, Malik Shaukat Ali, became the chief ARP warden. On the eve of the celebration of the fourth anniversary of independence, Daultana inspected ARP warden posts and parades of local rifle training squads at the University Grounds. He also visited a detachment of the Auxiliary Nurses Training Corps in the grounds of the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.[76] Ten days later, as we have already noted, a mock air attack formed part of a spectacular ARP display in the city. Several displays followed including one in the former Hindu Krishan Nagar locality involving over a hundred trained wardens and setting off flares and smoke bombs. The event also featured the detection and handing over to the police of "fifth columnists."[77] Here we see more than a faint echo of the nature and the psychological background of the British Home Guard's activities during the "phony war" with Germany in 1939.

The Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore's leading English daily, relayed to its readers reports culled from British newspapers regarding the "panic" in neighboring Amritsar. On September 1 it quoted a report in the *Observer* that over twenty thousand people had fled the city in the previous two to three weeks. It also noted the large number of transfers of bank deposits to branches deeper in India and the unseasonably high sales of wheat (some three thousand sacks) in the Amritsar grain

[72] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 72.
[73] Ibid; *Civil and Military Gazette* (January 12, 1951).
[74] Ibid; *Civil and Military Gazette* (July 18, 1951).
[75] Ibid ft. 41, 101; *Civil and Military Gazette* (July 21, 1951).
[76] Ibid, 73; *Civil and Military Gazette* (August 14, 1951).
[77] Ibid; *Civil and Military Gazette* (September 4, 1951).

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market.[78] East Punjab governor Sir Chandulal Trivedi's tour of the border areas was interpreted as an attempt "to allay the panic that has suddenly arisen."[79] The closing of the Wagah border crossing emphasized the gulf that then separated the former "twin cities."

Ties had been much closer in 1950. Relations warmed up again in 1955 with the onset of Cricket Diplomacy. However, even at the height of tensions, the border areas saw "illicit" trade and crossings of people, sometimes with the connivance of the poorly organized and motivated border police. For sections of the local population, the new international boundary was hardly acknowledged, and the border areas were what has been termed "spaces of refusal."[80]

People-to-People Contact

The Indian and Pakistani states criminalized informal cross-border ties, but nevertheless these continued throughout the 1950s given the porous nature of the international border. Some border crossings were prompted by the desire to maintain relations with near neighbors. People and goods were smuggled across in large quantities. Local knowledge of the border and continued cross-border ties, such as those between former Muslim tenants and their migrated Sikh landlords, facilitated these activities. Fortunes were to be made for smugglers who were also assisted by the poor policing of border security units. Ilyas Chattha's groundbreaking study[81] reveals smuggling not merely as a catalyst for the post-Partition expansion of Lahore's marketplaces, but also as a marker for the socioeconomic empowerment of the population involved and a thriving market for mass consumption.[82]

Chattha also uses previously unexplored border police records to reveal that people continued pre-Partition habits of visiting local markets for shopping and even attended wedding parties across the international border.[83] A police report for an individual by the name of Sadiq stated that he had transgressed the border "to watch Indian films in Amritsar."[84] Other reports reveal how Muslim-Sikh pre-Partition ties led to episodes of border crossings, and there was even some commercial activity that mirrored on a small scale the cross-border trading that has been chronicled in the Bengal borderland.[85]

Alongside these illicit border movements, both states permitted people-to-people contact during lulls in tensions. One such occasion was when Prime Ministers Liaquat Ali Khan and Jawaharlal Nehru signed the Minorities Agreement in New Delhi early in April 1950. This was followed by several goodwill gestures including a visit of

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid; *Civil and Military Gazette* (September 1, 1951).

[80] R. Jones, "Spaces of Refusal: Rethinking Sovereign Power and Resistance at the Border," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102, no. 3 (2012): 685–99.

[81] Chattha, *The Punjab Borderland*.

[82] Ibid, 109–25.

[83] Chattha uses First Information Reports to tabulate the descriptions given by apprehended border crossers in the 1950s. See Table 2.3, *The Punjab Borderland*, 77.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Van Schendel, 2005.

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Pakistani journalists to Amritsar and the reopening for the first time (since the September 1949 rupee devaluation) of the Amritsar-Lahore rail link for goods traffic.[86]

The pre-Partition tradition of Lahore and Amritsar intercity luncheon meetings was revived on June 18, when thirty Rotarians and their guests, including six ladies from Lahore, visited Amritsar to attend an intercity meeting of the 88th Rotary District.[87] A few weeks later, Sheikh Abdul Malik, president of the Punjab Traders Federation, led a mission to Amritsar. He was greeted by local officials on both sides of the Wagah-Attari border. Before returning to Pakistan, the mission met the Indian prime minister Nehru, who approved of the appointment of an Indo-Pakistan Trade Board to settle disputes between the two dominions.[88] During this period of rapprochement, there were cross-border business contacts, student visits, and religious pilgrimages.[89] A standard repertoire was developed involving farewells and greetings at the staging post of Wagah, followed by receptions in the border cities, which were now serving as symbols of reconciliation between the two nations. Less than three years earlier, amidst the horrors of Partition, Lahore and Amritsar had been major killing grounds.

The July 1951 War Scare abruptly halted such contacts. Early in 1953, however, people-to-people initiatives helped improve bilateral relations. In February, the Amritsar Peace Committee convened a conference at Attari with its West Punjab counterpart. The discussions focused on the ways to improve relations, including trade between India and Pakistan.[90] Later that year the Amritsar branch of the Joint Pakistan-India Trade Board joined the call for revived trade.[91] On July 17, 1953, the border was opened to road traffic once more at Attari. In just over seven months, 38,651 Pakistanis and 12,653 Indians crossed at Wagah.[92] Attempts at Punjab-led trade normalization again foundered because of wider tensions—in this instance, the removal and imprisonment of Sheikh Abdullah, the prime minister of Jammu and Kashmir.[93] Negotiations dragged on regarding the resumption of the Lahore-Amritsar rail link. Finally on October 28, the first train left Amritsar for Lahore, carrying among its VIP passengers Raja Ghazanfar Ali, the Pakistan high commissioner in Delhi.[94] In December, students and staff from Government College Ludhiana were the well-publicized guess at Government College Lahore's annual sports and prize-giving ceremonies. Diplomatically, honors were shared when the Ludhiana principal won the staff race and the governor of West Punjab, the old boys' race.[95]

[86] *Tribune* (May, 15 1950).

[87] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 71; *Tribune* (June, 18 1950).

[88] Ibid; *Tribune* (July, 7 1950).

[89] The *Civil and Military Gazette* gave prominent coverage to a visit of one hundred Sikh pilgrims to Panja Sahib Gurdwara. The *jatha* passed through Lahore after being greeted by its deputy commissioner S. S. Jafri at Wagah. *Civil and Military Gazette* (April 12, 1950).

[90] Talbot, *Divided Cities,* 73; *Dawn* (February 14, 1953).

[91] Ibid; *Dawn* (August, 12 1953).

[92] D. W. S. Hunt Deputy High Commissioner's FR, February 9 1954, DO 35/5296 TNA, Kew.

[93] Sten Widmalm, *Kashmir in Comparative Perspective: Democracy and Violent Separatism in India* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2002), 46.

[94] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 74.

[95] FR December 15, 1953, DO 35/5296, TNA, Kew.

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People-to-people contact picked up further in 1955, when in a foretaste of the use of cricket in 2004–2005 to normalize relations, the India-Pakistan Test Series of January–February provided an occasion for opening the border. Despite the initial apprehension of the Pakistan authorities,[96] the opening of Lahore to Indian visitors was a great success. Cricket was a minor attraction for many of the Indian visitors who came to reconnect with pre-Partition friends and to visit their old homes. According to one account, "people had come from many towns and cities to meet their friends and some had traveled from places as far away as Rawalpindi, Peshawar or Karachi. I have no words to describe such an emotionally charged scene."[97] Here was evidence that despite the human tragedies surrounding the 1947 Partition, the Punjab could act as a bridge as well as a great divide between India and Pakistan. While *Dawn's* motives for reporting comments from cross-border visitors such as those below are obvious, the sentiments appear genuine.

> It is such a great pleasure to be back in Lahore. It has the same old look and has been an immense joy to meet many of my classmates. They have been so nice to me. I wish the old days were back . . . .
>
> Lahore has not changed much. It is so different from what fanatics in East Punjab want us to believe. I could probably live here ages and not feel a stranger—so good my Muslim friends are to me. They have welcomed me back home with open arms.[98]

The British deputy high commissioner based in the city corroborated this state of affairs, reporting to London that on "one evening a considerable procession of Hindus and Sikhs and Pakistanis moved down the Mall shouting slogans for friendship between India and Pakistan."[99]

Hard on the heels of the Test Series, an East Punjab Police hockey team played a series of exhibition matches in Montgomery and Lahore. Special five-day permits were issued to Indian visitors, seven thousand of whom crossed the Wagah border on April 20, 1955, in fleets of buses as well as on cycles and in cars. "The old walled city of Lahore bears a festive look," *Dawn* reported, "with buntings and welcome slogans hanging in various localities especially Gowalmandi and Anarkali."[100] Free food and accommodation were provided and "even the *tongawallas* refused to charge a fare for their Hindu and Sikh passengers."[101] At an official reception hosted by the Pakistan branch of the Indo-Pakistan Joint Trade Board, its convenor, M. K. Mir, declared that

[96] The British deputy high commissioner in Lahore reported that police reinforcements had been brought in and plans laid for dealing with disturbances. FR February 7, 1955, DO 35/5296, TNA, Kew.

[97] Som Anand, *Lahore: Portrait of a Lost City* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998), 107. Unlike many of the visitors, the author frequently traveled to the city as his father, Lala Faqir Chand Anand, stayed on after partition amidst a shortage of Pakistani banking experts to run the National City Bank.

[98] Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 75; *Dawn*, February 2, 1955. The first comment was made by a Hindu lady who had studied in the city before the 1947 Partition. The second came from a former Hindu resident.

[99] Ibid; FR February 7, 1955, DO 35/5296, TNA, Kew.

[100] Gowalmandi and Anarkali had significant Hindu commercial and residential properties in pre-Partition Lahore. *Dawn* (April 20, 1955).

[101] See Talbot, *Divided Cities*, 75, and *Dawn* (April, 21, 1955).

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if India and Pakistan created, "unbreakable ties of friendship, they could march on the road of progress."[102]

Cricket Diplomacy resumed when the border was opened for six days in January 1956. On this occasion some six thousand Indian visitors came to Lahore to attend an unofficial test match between Pakistan and an Marylebone Cricket Club "A" team at the Bagh-i-Jinnah stadium. *Dawn* proudly declared that the customs post at Wagah was kept open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily and the staff was tripled so that no visitor was detained more than "five minutes for the necessary formalities."[103] January 21 was declared a public holiday in Lahore. The next day, Indian dignitaries were publicly honored in a *mushaira* (poetry recitation) at the Lahore Town Hall.[104]

Within a short space of time such official ease of cross-border access and warmth seemed inconceivable. This helps to explain how it has slipped from historical view in examinations of early Indo-Pakistan relations. Instead, what is uppermost in narratives is the fact that less than a decade later, Lahore residents were ordered into the hastily dug slit-trenches during the frequent air raid warnings. In early September 1965, armed conflict in Kashmir had spilled over to the Punjab plains. Some of the fiercest tank battles since the Second World War took place to the south and east of Sialkot and Lahore.[105]

Conclusion

During the opening decade of independence, the Lahore-Amritsar borderland was at times a space of intense insecurity. The desperate improvisation of civil defense measures in July 1951 spoke eloquently of Lahore's vulnerability, as did the flight of capital and individuals from neighboring Amritsar. The latter city's border proximity exerted a drag on development, which was subsequently compounded by the years of turmoil arising from Sikh militancy. Lahore's expansion despite a perilous conflict zone location has, however, been remarkable. The early twenty-first century saw it emerge as a megacity with over twelve million people.

Alongside border incursions, rumors of invasion and panic, the cities in the 1950s also occasionally symbolized the possibilities of a wider rapprochement between India and Pakistan. The opening of the border in 1955–1956 saw Indian schoolgirls roaming round Lahore, while Partition migrants sought old friends and lost homes. Such fraternizing was halted by state-level conflict over Kashmir. Recent research has, however, revealed that illicit cross-border trade and contacts continued even when formal ties were shut down. The Punjab border remained porous until late in the twentieth century.

The sensitive Punjab borderland was both impacted by and influenced the range of Indo-Pakistan relations during the early postindependence period. War scares not

[102] Ibid; *Dawn* (April 24, 1955).
[103] *Dawn* (January 26, 1956).
[104] *Dawn* (January 21, 1956).
[105] Brian Cloughley, *A History of the Pakistan Army: Wars and Insurrections* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Farooq Bajwa, *From Kutch to Tashkent: The Indo-Pakistan War of 1965* (London: Hurst, 2013).

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only disrupted daily life, but rumors of spies in the border cities fed into national narratives of mistrust.[106] Cricket Diplomacy's opening of the border replenished lingering ties of personal affection across religious and national divides.[107] It also improved the tone of relations between Karachi and New Delhi, at least until the next downturn shut off such officially sanctioned citizen-to-citizen interaction. In these circumstances, "illicit" interactions continued as lived realities in the borderland continued to give the lie to rigid demarcations of sovereignty—those lines drawn on the map. Pre-Partition entertainment habits, consumer preferences, and sociocultural ties persisted, leading to a cross-border flow of people and goods, despite of or often assisted by the border management regime. Nature threw up its own issues as the Ravi changed course, frustrating the demarcation of the Punjab border. Here was an unremarked on, at the time, example of how Partition border–related issues "secularized" bilateral relations. In sum, during the early decades of independence, the border, for good or for ill, remained a resource for individuals and communities as much as for the Indian and Pakistan states' relations with each other.

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[106] In a widely reported case, Santokh Singh was arrested in Lahore during the 1951 War Scare while disguised as a Muslim. *Civil and Military Gazette* (April 26, 1951).

[107] For some individuals, a kind of "cultural bereavement" took on unhealthy forms, while others imagined a harmonious past that had been cruelly overtaken by the events of 1947.

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