IMPLICATIONS OF LOCAL CONFLICTS ON BILATERAL RELATIONS: CASES OF THE LAND BOUNDARY AND ENCLAVE CONFLICTS ON INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONSHIP

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BY

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UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that this thesis entitled **"Implications of Local Conflicts on Bilateral Relations: Cases of the Land Boundary and Enclave Conflicts on India-Bangladesh Relationship"** submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy to **The University Of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences And Technology**, Bengaluru, is my original work, conducted under the supervision of my guide **Dr Anshuman Behera**. I also wish to inform that no part of the research has been submitted for a degree or examination at any university. References, help and material obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged

I hereby confirm the originality of the work and that there is no plagiarism in any part of the dissertation.

Place: Bengaluru   Signature of the Candidate

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this thesis **"Implications of Local Conflicts on Bilateral Relations: Cases of the Land Boundary and Enclave Conflicts on India-Bangladesh Relationship"** submitted by **Mr. Surya Sankar Sen** was carried out under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted for a degree or examination at any university. References, help and material obtained from other sources have been duly acknowledged.

I hereby confirm the originality of the work and that there is no plagiarism in any part of the dissertation.

Place: Bengaluru   **Signature of the Research Supervisor**
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For my Family

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List of Acronyms

LBA   Land Boundary Agreement

BJP   Bharatiya Janata Party

AGP   Asom Gana Parishad

TMC   Trinamool Congress

CPI (M)   Communist Party of India (Marxist)

UPA   United Progressive Alliance

DA   Dahagram-Angarpota

TBC   Tin Bigha Corridor

EPC   Enclave People's Committee

BSF   Border Security Force

BGB   Border Guard Bangladesh

Synopsis

The study argues that for long, inquiries on borders and borderland issues/conflicts have prioritised statist perspectives, whereby their representation comes to be articulated through the lens of state interests. In such discernments, inquiries into the 'local' interests, their productions of the space, progressions of adaptation and resilience have been relegated to the footnotes of analysis. The problematique of the local's nonappearance emerges within the processes of identifying, categorising and intermediating in conflicts; which have predominantly remained contained by the rubrics of state power and national interests. The study engages with the resultant gaps which emerge between the indicated and observable outcomes of these processes in local sites of conflict, by problematising their corroborating pragmatisms and theoretical rationalisations. Moreover, by deconstructing the essentialisms of state credo which accentuate the practicalisation of its power, the study identifies the position of the local, as an integral component of a conflict setting, despite its nonappearance in analyses and dominant, discursive productions.

Taking the Land Boundary Agreement (2015) as the case of review, the research explores the implications that this national-interest based bilateral action had at the local levels of its implementation. It departs from a conventional impact analysis of resolution processes, by shifting the focus of its inquiry to understanding the local and its multiple variations, evinced through negotiations between constituent actors and the state in navigating systemic and structural shifts brought about by the latter's intercessions. Thereby repositioning the assessment of effectiveness of resolution policies upon the observable impacts these mediations render at the local levels, rather

than in terms of their actualisation of abstract, national interests. This position is reflected in the title of the study; in viewing two issues that were considered to be resolved at the bilateral level between India and Bangladesh, as on-going conflicts that continue to impact upon the local level even today.

The study adopts a mixed method approach to extend the logic of domestic-international linkages in the study of foreign policy and subsequently interrogate the effectiveness of bilateralism as a method of addressing inter-state issues, with localised implications. The marginalisation of the 'local' narrative in the definition of national interest is examined, to alternatively position an engagement with the local and situate the category as a critical point of analysis within the discursive productions of conflict resolution. Therefore, a field-based ethnography, based on qualitative methods for investigation to understand the machinations of the local was adopted. Establishing the local category as a point of engagement also brought forth a delineation of its socio-spatial productions in the context of the India-Bangladesh borderland. This alternative framework towards engaging with a space predominantly described through its interactions with state power and bilateral, regional conflicts brings forth an account of local adaptations and resilience that belies traditionalist evaluations. The contrasts and convergences between these two framings of the space, emerges through the study's exploration of their interactions vis-à-vis the other.

This alternative position provides a critical perspective on understanding the impacts of the bilateral resolution of the enclave dispute on the India-Bangladesh borderland and its locales. The local experience emerges through the study's exploration of adaptations, disruptions and continuities in both local and national processes playing out at the local level. These insights allow us to position the local as an integral part of regional, borderland historiography, which often tends to fall into trappings of statist

perceptions or remain obscured by the historiographies of their emergences as independent regional countries, and shared conflicts. The two contrasting readings of borderland historiography, brings forth very disparate positionalities through which its historical and contemporary transformations can be interpreted. The study merits a balanced approach, which does not displace to prioritise, in order to position the specificities of certain adaptations against the circumstances that produced them – whether for the state or the local levels in which its power operates. The categories of interests and identifications underlying the production of the space both at the local level of existence and the national level of perception, also brings forth alternative construals of the underlying rudiments of classification, perception and action that challenge the essentialisms of their general conceptualisation.

The contrasts that emerge between these two categories, are highlighted in the chapter titles; as the study moves from providing an alternative understanding of the enclave dispute from a local standpoint, to outlining with the variation of discernments in prevalent discursive foundations and associations which determined public and state engagements with the issue; to finally situating the local in the prevalent discourses of bilateralism. The variability in perceptions of the national and the local is evinced firstly with regard to the enclaves, presented through an analysis of the history of transformation of the local *chhitmohol* into the state enclave; and the subsequent impacts of this conversion on perceptions and productions of statelessness in local processes and public acuities. Subsequently, the categories of the local and national are determined based on an identification of the specific interests they are constituted around. The factors underlying their specific compositions are also engaged with to differentiate between the local and national at phases of constancy and indeterminacy.

By integrating the perspective of the local in assessing the localised impacts of bilateral conflict resolution, the study brings forth certain critical reconfigurations in the conceptualisation of bilateralism and within larger theoretical models of comprehending state power and national interests. The study's focused inquiry into the local brings forth critical details which allows for the extension of understanding state power and its interactions with local socio-spatial configurations beyond their ideologised and normative renderings in predominant exemplifications. Therefore the local becomes the lens through which one can engage with the machinations of state power, and the representativeness of its interests, by inquiring into scope and objectives of localised processes that respond to or emerge out of the impacts of its practicalisation. The local is thereby established as a counterpoise to the essentialism of state power captured in dominant theoretical traditions and scaffoldings of its power. Alongside alternative construals of local interests, local agency and local resilience, the absolutism underlying perceptions of state power is also problematised.

The bilateral resolution of the enclave dispute between India and Bangladesh emerged as a relevant case through which the study's theoretical suppositions could be corroborated. The referents and conditionalities which constitute the bilateral enclave dispute entailed varied categorisations of space, interests, identity and power, which were intertwined in cycles of struggle and negotiation vis-à-vis the other. However, most accounts on the issue have sought to prioritise readings based on national demarcations; thereby concealing the discourse of the local that was commensurate in its influences in shaping the local space, along with its enclosed identities and interests. The study, through an engagement with localised frameworks of adaptation and resilience problematises prevalent understandings of statelessness and its

underlying socio-spatial marginalisation, bringing forth previously obscured insights on the localised productions of identity in these spaces, as well as the limits of interactions between enclave and non-enclave residents of the locale. The machinations of this particular socio-spatial setting have been predominantly subjected to readings which position these groups in terms of their perceived, relative sequestration and subsequent inaccessibility in relation to the other. The variability underlying the localised operation and production observable within a conflict setting, positions statist engagement in such spaces as reducible to considerations of shared or specific national interest. The study in this regard, brings forth critical reconfigurations in the understanding of bilateralism by engaging with the local as a relevant point of analysis. The adjustments to the conceptualisation of bilateral processes and frameworks for resolution and intervention at the local levels that the study rationalises are based on recognising subjectivities underlying the configuration and practicalisation of national ethos. Additionally, the factors impacting upon cycles of national interest convergence has been engaged with to understand the implications of the region and local on the production of bilateral relations between countries as well.

The research therefore reconfigures the position of the local in International Relations as a static spatial disaggregation. In accounting for the adaptations evinced at different points in its direct interactions with the state and its power, or indirectly with the categorisations of identity and spatiality it imposes, the study situates the local as a polyvalent and dynamic socio-spatial configuration. The concomitant theoretical reconfigurations the study posits attempts to secure the local as a relevant point of inquiry and analysis in studying state power and the impacts of its interactions with other comparable units in the regional and world systems. This recognition

necessitates changes in the perceptions of objectivity and normativity underlying statist categorisations of conflict and enumerations of identity and spatiality in such settings. Such a step works against binarised depiction of the local and its associated processes as existing in opposition or in diffidence to the state and the prescriptions of its power. The spatial variegations underlying the impacts of the national on specific locales or of processes of bilateral mediation on local conflicts establishes a representative relationality between the state and the local; whereby their dynamics are not textured by prevalent paradigmatic essentialisms, but upon representative assessments of local realities.

The study's engagement with the local highlights key discernments into borderland realities, as well as that of conflict settings to understanding the different ways in which the state's power competes with, as well as accommodates, more localised processes operational at these territorially disaggregated and notionally peripheral sites. These processes comprise both cooperative and conflictual frameworks of engagement between state and non-state actors, representing a more realistic struggle between change and constancy, which constitutes an integral component of any conflict setting. By incorporating these alternative perspectives within larger theoretical paradigms of state power, the study interpolates the 'local' as a key referent in comprehending the 'national' and thereby shifting the foundations of the latter's invariable categorisation in International Relations discourse to incorporate considerations of inclusivity and reflexivity.

List of Publications

Sen, S. S. (2021). Situating the Local in Bilateralism: Assessing Local Impacts of the India–Bangladesh Enclave Exchange. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations, 25*(1), 52–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973598420979761

Chatterjee, S., Sen, S. S., & Banerjee, M. (2021). Borders, Citizenship, and the Local: Everyday Life in Three Districts of West Bengal. *Borders in Globalization Review*, *2*(2), 10-25. https://doi.org/10.18357/bigr22202120196

Chapter 1

Borderland and Bilateralism: An Introduction to Local and National Discourses

About the Study

Enclaves are portions of state territory entirely surrounded by foreign dominions. In political geography, understandings of enclaves as territorial spaces have been usually premised on identifications of actual, geographical detachment, and in certain frameworks, an additional level of notional dissociation from the state. In South Asia, enclaves were viewed as foibles upon the territorialised existence of the state and impediments upon the effective management of its territory. As a result, theoretical and academic discussions on South Asian enclaves have primarily rested upon discussions on their statelessness and deprivation of basic rights for those who inhabited them. The India-Bangladesh border enclaves, their perceptions and engagement within popular and academic usages have been shaped by more dominant discourses of territorial sovereignty and originary possession. The bilateral resolution which paved the way for their exchange was significantly impacted upon by the politics of the two states of India and Bangladesh, and was premised upon statist concerns of territorial loss. The local impacts of the dispute, from the point where the issue emerges as a bilateral concern till its resolution, have been mostly absent from analyses.

Prior to integration into their respective national spaces in 2015, India-Bangladesh border enclaves existed as territorial oddities, whose inhabitants were rendered 'stateless' for more than sixty years. The range of their struggles post integration can be associated to a form of internal displacement; where they are deprived of basic safeguards and stabilities, although having received official citizenship from their respective countries of residence. Despite the implementation of a formal, bilateral resolution, new and old complications and obstacles at the local level have given rise to new forms of inequalities, exclusions and deprivations. This can be attributed to the absence of local issues and negotiations in analyses, that emerge in territories and communities which have existed for a considerable time without any form of governmental instruction or intercession.

The study addresses the reasons behind the persistence of local 'conflicts' in these spaces subsequent to official steps towards the bilateral resolution of all outstanding issues, concerning the enclaves. Additionally, the study will bring forth an insight into the manner in which the local inhabitants of these erstwhile stateless spaces and surrounding locales have been integrated into their respective national spaces, vis-à-vis their interactions at the local level with non-enclave residents and with the state in its localised manifestations. Related issues of displacement, rehabilitation, validity of rights to property ownership across the border, provision of basic rights and representation of these people are also points of inquiry the study engages with. By developing a framework to understand the local, the study will position the experiences and histories of the inhabitants of these former enclaves within the meta-narratives of the nation state, national interests, and the machinations of their bilateral interactions.

The research focuses on the 'unsettled' issues left unaddressed by the Land Boundary Agreement between India and Bangladesh, to ascertain how, and to what extent bilateralism is driven by considerations of national interest. Furthermore, the study will find the position of the local (if any) in bilateral discourses that guide its practicalisation by the state. The connection between conflicts manifesting at the local level and its impacts on the bilateral relations between the two countries, will also be discerned through an understanding of cyclical interest convergence. The study will position local narratives as an alternative point of inquiry to offset perusals of statist essentialisms that have dominated representation in popular discourses.

Methodology

The primary objective of this study arose from trying to understand the localised impacts of inter-state mediation in conflicts. The semantics underlying resolution processes often obscure the operation of tendencies contributing to shifts in the nature and form of local conflicts subsequent to the state's mediation in such settings. As a consequence, issues that persist are often viewed as dissociated from preceding localised conditions which impede their effective resolution. The persistence of such conflicts also impact upon inter-state relations as well, as such issues come to be subsumed under categories of understanding and perception which align with the nature of relations prevalent between two or more countries during a particular period in their association.

Based on this understanding, a case study of the Land Boundary Agreement between India and Bangladesh with regard to the resolution of the Enclave issue was selected to understand such processes of exclusion of the local, from national and bilateral

narratives. The primary aim of the study is to introduce the local as an important referent in the study of international relations and a unit of engagement in gauging the impacts and efficacy of national and bilateral processes of conflict resolution. The predominance of the state in discussions on inter-state conflict has based understandings and processes related to the same on abstractions of what constitutes its associated interests and stakes, thereby eluding local narratives and perceptions as a point of engagement.

The exclusion of the 'local' from discussions on conflict resolution from a bilateral approach inhibits a comprehensive appraisal of any issue the process seeks to engage with. This partial interpretation then constitutes the foundations upon which its addressability through state action is determined. An objective of the research in identifying a more comprehensive framework through which to understand bilateralism necessitated an engagement with local narratives alongside the states' reading of the issue. This opens up the possibility of bringing forth an alternative discourse, one that is premised on engaging with the 'local' as a point of analysis. The research furthermore explores the variable perceptions and negotiations around the presence of stateless enclaves, to understand the disjuncture between statist enumerations of their existence and their localised manifestations that emerge through interactions and processes that are textured by their extant limitations. To gather an understanding derived from local experiences allows for a more nuanced understanding of the categories delimited by the state in its resolution processes and subsequently reveal the limitations of its classification spaces, territory and identity.

Establishing this premise allows for a critical exploration of prevalent local conflicts; which the research states, have persisted beyond the resolution of the enclave issue at a

bilateral level, as a consequence of the absence of the local from its discursive and applied contexts. More specifically, the borderland emerges as an important site for studying the interactions between the state and the local, as opposed to its more conventional readings that emphasise an unqualified acceptance of state power by its geographically peripheral populations. The objectives and research design necessitated the adoption of a multi-method approach. The study bases its findings upon an engagement with local perceptions surrounding the enclave dispute and its bilateral settlement, in an effort to connect the gaps that exist between ground level realities and their representation in statist narratives. Noting these differences has delivered a key understanding of the link between national and local discursivity and the nuances of power that underwrite their interactions vis-à-vis the other. Based on this understanding, a case study of the Land Boundary Agreement between India and Bangladesh, with a well-defined emphasis on the resolution of the bilateral enclave dispute was selected to understand such processes of exclusion of the local, from national and bilateral narratives.

The study is based on an ethnographic research of two former Bangladeshi enclaves in the Cooch Behar district of West Bengal and a former Indian enclave of Bangladesh, for a total period spanning ten months. The approach was considered in order to facilitate a view of local realities and to shift away from the primacy accorded to the state in International Relations in understanding the enclave dispute. Sites were selected from a list of enclaves that met certain established criteria deemed significant for the study, viz., proximity to the border and sites of inter-state conflict, recorded inhabitancy. The criticalities of the study necessitated this approach, in order to situate the local as an

important referent in the analysis of inter-state conflicts. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions were conducted at selected field sites; and subsequently, telephonic interviews with respondents to take stock of recent developments, with regard to the issue of titled ownership of enclave land which was still evolving at the time of departure from the field.

A historical analysis was employed to account for the presence of local, informal channels of management, organisation and control which were created out of recursive local interdependencies between enclave and non-enclave locals, preceding the state's entry. There was a need to extend analyses on enclaves to include these obscured histories which positions them as embedded within their immediate locale despite their underscored statelessness and isolation in dominant discourses. These exclusions from statist framings of history and territoriality also preclude any consideration of the impacts of the subcontinent's decolonisation and the emergence of new states in creating new forms of interdependence between enclaves and other locales. This dislocation from regional historiography and its abrupt inclusion upon integration has averted engagements based upon the enclaves' position within a patchwork of multiple, cross-cutting local histories. By situating the state at the forefront of history upon independence in 1947, the history of the enclaves essentially became the history of its recovery from statelessness. Thus the study seeks to question perceptions of enclave statelessness which have been viewed as absolute in prevalent discourses through a functionalist approach to understanding local historiography.

An analytical and empirical focus in engaging with cases selected, representative of the issues central to the research's focus was employed to discern narratives underlying

emergent and existent local conflicts, to understand the gap between the national and the local whose underlying processes the study outlines; and also to engage with the multiple discourses dealing with the local, national and bilateral. Through this, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of local conflicts and how the residents of erstwhile enclaves have continually configured and re-configured their position at the local level and within the larger state. Insights into processes and interactions through which these communities have grasped with this continual cycle of adaptation have also revealed details about local, social capital networks that allowed these stateless individuals to bypass their isolation and its associated deprivations.

The Border as Local: Local and National Construals of South Asian Borders

In South Asia, the significance of borders, in terms of the regulatory and delimiting functions they perform has been the preserve of their modern, postcolonial variance. Prior to that, borders were not the material realities of state power they exist as today. Instead, they were notions of separation that emerged around territorial segregations of communities with common socio-cultural mores (Ludden, 2003) or through the recognition of occupied land legitimised through religious ceremonial sacrifices. In the context of modern rationalised geographical space, derived from the Westphalian ideal-type, the validity of such delimitations proves difficult to envisage. A key factor that obfuscates such steady rationalisations is the issue of borderland identity and its multiple renderings; which has escaped the grasps of postcolonial territorialisation carried forth by the state, and remains fluid and uncontained by such physical and notional restraints.

In South Asia, the reorganisation of decolonised territory into states ran parallel to the dissociation of specifically constructed narratives and histories from a shared regional colonial historiography. The fragmentation of the same into separate narratives, each in tune with the exclusive nationalist agenda of the respective states, came to define their own particularistic discourses on citizenship, nationalism and identity and territory. However, the primacy accorded to territory by melding a nationalist rhetoric to the same has often proved inimical to the resolution of territorial contestations. The regional histories that sought to naturalise state claims over national territory, has often resulted in conflicting claims over the same spaces between two or more states. The eternalising of such claims fails to consider the point of their origination, which in most cases can be traced to the territorial distribution that newly independent states inherited out of their decolonisation. The divergences between particularistic notions of state spatiality have resulted in conflicting assertions over territories amongst states (Murayama, 2006). This is further compounded by their rigid acquiescence to a constructed nationalist narrative, where concessions are considered as compromises to its notional foundations.

Borders in South Asia emerged as the adapted remnants of colonial demarcations, reconfigured amongst the newly independent states through varying degrees and forms of interaction within a continuum of probable arrangements – ranging from regional conflicts over disputed territories to bilateral agreements towards the settlement of outstanding border issues. For the most part, the contemporary history of the subcontinent's borders has been shaped by the states responding to the crises and opportunities presenting themselves at the limits of their power. Alongside the demarcation of the limits to state authority, borders have also played a crucial role in

shaping the identity of those who are contained by it. Nationalist rhetoric adopted by the newly independent states of the region led to both a subconscious as well as an evident political naturalisation of people's relationship with the spaces they occupied. These processes often played out as reinforcements of territorial claims or possessions as historically and culturally situated (Chatterjee & Sen, 2019). For instance, references to the geographical limits of the Indian state in its national anthem, precludes the inadmissibility of the idea of the state prior to the subcontinent's colonisation. Through the historicising of these territorialised identities, such cultural allusions tend to reinforce the idea of the eternal state in the national imagination (Hopkins & Dixon, 2006).

In terms of their modern reckonings as the limits of state power and sovereignty, borders often come to signify fixity; based upon an enduring and often intransigent eternalising of the nation state (Donnan & Wilson, 1999; Grassiani & Swinkels, 2014). In delimiting the territorial extent of the state's exclusive and supreme authority to govern, borders became an integral part of statecraft. However, the state's authority did not reside at its limits, but came to encompass adjacent areas as well, leading to the emergence of the spatial category of the borderland. Commonly materialising in the form of barbed wire fences, check-posts and watchtowers, these regions exhibit a heightened sense of security which is indicative of their status of relevance as the symbolic gateway into the nation state (Fassin, 2011). Over time, the necessity of maintaining the salience of borders was related as a necessary corollary to the securitisation of the state against external infractions as well as internal dissensions often playing out at its limits. The resultant territorialisation of state authority, along with the identity of its citizens came to inform the nature of dissonances as well as interactions between states and people separated by

borders. (Hardwick et al., 2009). The political significance of borders also grew substantially as states struggled to uphold this rhetoric of distinction by enforcing strict laws against border crossing and migration, all singularly directed towards redefining certain kinds of movements and interactions, some of which pre-date the state itself, as illegal or illegitimate (Fassin, 2011; Newman, 2011).

Consequently, issues surrounding immigration and border regulation are frequently used as political capital to reinforce the limits of the state. However, the tendency to reinforce a uniform national imagination of belonging and spatiality often falters as we move our attention closer towards the borderlands and its resident communities. The territorial divisions and resultant separations and detachments brought forth by modern state borders have impacted upon communities which had historically co-existed within a larger system of interactions and interdependencies. Upon the establishment of the border, these channels between different communities have either been disrupted or ruptured, and exchanges and interactions came to be regulated under formal state authority, which imposed limitations on the admissibility of certain kinds of interactions across the border (Lorber, 1999). These interactions have experienced fluctuations in response to historical, cultural, and political transformations, whereby actors and groups negotiating the borderscape in the pursuit of livelihood practices, maintenance of kinship ties and fulfilling quotidian demands of subsistence, have had to navigate its subsequent impacts on the space. Often, these changes have spawned corresponding and conflicting emplacements and temporalities at the local level, in response to statist framings of these limits (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007, p. xxx). The processes that such changes have given rise to have allowed for these lines to be both reinforced and traversed, thereby

establishing a more contextual and fluid rendering of these limits textured by local interactions and experiences. Similarly, it has also spawned processes of contextual appellations of the self and other at the local levels.

Correspondingly, borderland identities have come to be constructed out of the necessity of navigating through its contemporary reality of regulations, restraint and control. The divergence from the conventional perceptions of belonging, observable at these sites leads to the creation of alternate identifications and associations for communities residing there, resulting in the formation of a distinct 'border culture' (Alvarez, 1995). Borderland demography exists in opposition to the advertent homogenisation of inhabitant identities across state territory. Primarily so because, opposed to statist apperceptions whereby its inhabitants carry identities established and assumed over time by the people occupying a particular space or bearing similarities in practices and customs, border identities have largely been shaped by the exigencies created by the peremptoriness that underlined colonial and postcolonial territorial management. The incompatibility underlying these different configurations of identity at the local level is often reinforced by the state through its powers of regulation and control of entry into its territory, by delimiting the identities and opportunities based on which admissions are permitted. At the borders, the relationality between nationalist conceptualisations of territory, security and development and its more localised framings are caught in a perpetual struggle to assert in perpetuity their influence; with their apparent disjuncture playing out on an everyday basis in the form of contestations, conflicts and adaptations. The heightened presence of the state at the borders, and the lives of its inhabitants contest against and interact with the other, in ways that are sustained by the liminality undergirding the space and its dual

understanding at the national and local levels. To understand this relationality, one may allude to the subjectivities underlying these dissonant framings of the borderland local. The border's functions as gateways may be viewed as either exclusionary or inclusionary depending on the positionality of the subject under consideration. For those residing in the borderlands, as represented in critical explanations of the border's function, state borders are often viewed as an impediment on the subject's choices and intentions. The contemporary reality of regulations and impeded mobilities goes on to affect the local imagination and the socio-cultural practices and norms which can create a sense of belonging for some and a feeling of alienation for others. An individual's position and identity within the state's framework of belonging also determines the extent of admissible political participation whether locally or through formal channels of the state. Provision of housing and access to education, healthcare, judicial protection as a result, significantly varies between citizens and immigrants. In the case of India's eastern borders with Bangladesh, these identifications continue to persist across generations and gain added weightage under changing political circumstances that seek to base citizenship upon socially and politically ascribed identifications. Additionally, state policies towards the management of its borders frequently encompass issues related to the management of local mobilities and livelihoods, which given the position of these spaces at the limits of the nation-state, often assumes a regulatory character. Local mobilities, social ties and livelihood practices of borderland inhabitants often fractured by state borders therefore rely on informal and alternative networks for their sustenance beyond the state's regulation and monitoring. The disjuncture between the state's conceptualisation of territory and the space as constituted through quotidian interactions

of its inhabitants often manifests in various forms, ranging from revisionist assertions for secession and autonomy, to more everyday circumventions in collaboration with other local and cross border actors as well as state actors at lower levels of disaggregation.

The significance of borders as defining the limits of its power has undergone reconfigurations in the contemporary framings of an interconnected global space, to encompass processes whereby the state's authority is continually reinforced internally against recession, fragmentation and violation, simultaneously, as it realigns its own positionality within a mutable interconnected regional and world system. In viewing the border as its limit, justifications for its securitisation by the state have often been predicated on Realist assumptions. In such elucidations, borders are represented as the site of separation from other states pursuing divergent and irreconcilable interests and competing to secure limited resources and intangible advantages, in a system with sparse potentials for cooperation. Similarly, conflicts at the borders, are viewed as an apparent corollary of its existence as the site separating two entities, often embodying incompatible interests.

The identification of what may be considered as disruptive or contributing to the origination of conflicts depends upon multiple conditions. However, these estimations often remain confined to the potential implications of the factors contributing to the local conflict on the attainment of national interest objectives (Schmidt, 1990). Subsequently, engagement with the conflict is expedited based on identifying which issues may be conducive or inimical to the realisation of state interests. Therefore, the representation of the 'local' appears to be constructed through the focus of the state and its interests. This leads to unwarranted essentialisms and reductions in discernments of complex and

polyvalent phenomena such as conflicts and the nature of their existence and operation at the local level. Such tendencies vastly misrepresent localised realities and position the resolution of on-going conflicts on the attainment of only those issues the state considers vital to the preservation or pursuit of its national interests. The subjectivities underlying statist discourses on local conflicts can be elicited through a study of the variance of its response across different situations. A point often employed in the subjectivist critique, which posits that state intervention leading to the transformation of 'local' into 'national' is initiated if the issue is perceived as being related to the attainment of their interests. The state tends to view local conflicts through considerations, reducible to qualifiers contributing to the fulfilment of national interests. Often, this leads to the conflict's persistence beyond the formal resolution by the state, albeit transformed by its intervention. In constituting means of remediation through its engagement with factors that are resonant with its national interests, the state fails to recognise the persistence of such conflicts in other forms. What remains missing from such analyses are inquiries into how the 'local' adapts and reacts to conditions which the state may view as contributing to the development of a conflict or its persistence after mediation.

The appropriation of an issue by the state often shrouds the localised aspects of its existence by predicating its evaluation and subsequent steps towards resolution on considerations of national interests, rather than the inherent necessity of its resolution. The issue hereupon is engaged with through the state's discernment of its underlying, causative factors. However, the heightening of a 'local' issue is not a consistent feature of state action. The 'local' is often viewed as restricted to a particular space, whereby the implications of its existence are not viewed to impact on national interests. Yet, when an

issue/conflict extends beyond the spatial limits of its presence or encompasses issues lying beyond state/local governments' prerogatives, it more or less indulges national engagement. The motivations for intervention in local affairs are often concealed by the semantics of state-led resolution and reconciliation processes. Such understandings cloak the need to understand the term as contingent to its specific context of operation or application as well as the need to deconstruct the ideological and linguistic presuppositions that reconciliatory processes might hold in specific situations. The language of resolution often comes to be determined by either the nation state or other intervening actors operating in a favourably skewed distribution of authority. Its underlying semantics reflects these differences in power positions and is therefore both politically and ideologically loaded in its wording. The efficacy and scope of reconciliation as a mode of conflict management is rigidly tied to its linguistic expression and the extent to which it either reflects or destabilises existing social divisions or other contributing factors of the said conflict. Conflicts or potential fault lines of conflict at the local level thereby are often sustained in this manner due to local resistances towards the adoption of the state's autarchic impositions (Schmidt, 1990).

Therefore, it appears as though the idea of 'national' and the associated interests of such an abstraction, mostly at the level of mutable perception. It is textured by the prevalent political regime, nature of governance and political climate amongst other factors. However, with regard to certain considerations fundamental to the preservation of the centrality of the state; namely issues related to territory, sovereignty and populations, state perceptions of interests and scope for action have often remained unaffected by such changes to its constitution or its contingent embedding within regional and world

systems. The identification of an issue as one constituting national interest essentially constitutes an exercise in prioritisation. Assessing issues in terms of its possible impacts on a nation's interests does not in any way change the fundamental nature of the issue itself. It continues to remain rooted locally in terms of its impacts and implications. The identification of its significance dissociates the issue from the local level through its appropriation through state involvement. Mediation, therefore, is not predicated on the inherent significance of an issue at hand, but on the determination of its severity on projections of its impacts on the pursuit of national interests. The national discourse on a 'local' issue therefore remains contingent upon prevalent ideologies of governance at a domestic level; and in cases of shared conflicts, upon external factors such as, configurations of the regional order. The understanding of conflicts at the national and inter-state levels often appears to be dissociated from the ground realities of their existence as well as from assessments of the localised impacts and implications of their occurrences. As mentioned earlier, the process by which the state determines the manner of its resolution often fails to account for issues beyond the consideration of national interests. By addressing issues that are commensurate with the national interests of the state, policies assume a 'pick and choose' approach towards issues that it deems relevant towards the resolution of outstanding conflicts. In doing so, the process binds itself wholly towards the fulfilment of considerations of the state's national interest, and not engaging with the conflict based on the contingencies of its localised existence and its operational dynamics, constituted through the quotidian interactions and exchanges of conflict actors at the local level[1].

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[1]The local can be understood as an alternative spatial category that exists within a continuum of

Similarly, the measures undertaken towards the management of borders are predicated on the centrality of the state as the foremost organiser of social, political, and economic relations. Such interpretations fail to account for local dynamics of interactions and identifications within a conflict environment, as how the 'local' adapts and reacts to conditions which the state may view as contributing to the emergence, presence, or the persistence of a conflict. These trends are quite prevalent at the borders, given their relevance as the limits of state sovereignty – a notion that has, since the emergence of the modern nation-state, contributed towards the securitisation and consolidation of its borders against external infractions and internal exigencies (Donnan & Wilson, 1999, p. 9; Flynn, 1997). In formulating resolution strategies with the objective of instituting or preserving its own authority, the state tends to dissociate local narratives and intentionality of the actors shaping the conflict situation. Such a perspective neglects the existence of the 'local' as an active category, constituted out of the experiences and perceptions of its constitutive actors and instead constituting means of remediation through an identification of factors that are resonant with its own identified and perceived interests.

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adaptation, accommodation and contestation with statist, geopolitical control over space, not only at the borders. In the context of this enquiry, it would be helpful to view the 'local' as a spatially contained cultural and social category which encompasses similar roles and performances to that of the state, but whose existence and functioning are attuned to the specific requirements of a particular sociality which are in constantly interaction with existent statist frameworks and categorisations of space, identity and permissible actions and mobilities. In introducing the local as a referent for engagement in analysis of borderland perceptions, it positions the spatial and social category as one that is not static, but determined by the subjectivities underlying the varying degrees and natures of quotidian engagement with the space and the various epistemic systems which undergird its construction. In adopting this framework, the local retains its inherent mutability as represented in a multitude of actorial strategies of those seeking to navigate through its consequent economic, social and political circumstances (Brambilla, 2015, p. 26).

Situating the Relevance of the Local in Bilateralism

Border conflicts, common to two or more states sharing a boundary, are often addressed at a bilateral or multilateral capacity[2]. However, the possibility, scope, and extent of cooperative engagement between two states are determined by the nature of the issue selected to be addressed. Convergences of national readings of local issues constitute the basis of realisable bilateral action. The identification of factors determining the possibility for bilateral engagement is dependent on the presence of conditions, complimentary to the participatory states' national interests. Simply put, the settlement of a particular issue has to either directly or indirectly further the national interests of the two collaborating states (Welch, 2005). Based upon this, strategies for engagement are subsequently devised at the 'national' levels of the cooperating states in tune with their specific national interest objectives. The furtherance of national interests may be a direct outcome of the resolution of the outstanding issue; or the settlement may itself be a precondition, or a first step towards the realisation of the two states' national interests. Often, the selection of issues is based on the states' identification of their capability gaps which they seek to address through coaction.

The strength of a bilateral agreement is assessed on the efficiency with which national interests are realised between two states, contained within the broader theme of its convergence. This exposes a gap when understanding the process through which states address local conflicts through a bilateral framework. Questions regarding bilateralism's efficacy as a mechanism of conflict management arise when such issues continue to exist

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[2] Since the scope of this research is limited to understanding the implications of local conflicts on bilateral relations, the discussion will not engage with ideas of multilateralism or institutional involvement at the regional or international levels.

beyond their remediation at the 'local' level. Therefore, the assessment of the success or failure of bilateralism in correlation with the addressing of 'local' issues, identified as significant at the 'national' level, becomes problematic. The 'local' often remains rooted to its immediate space of existence in terms of potential implications of its existence and eventual resolution. At times, the state underlines localised issues with notions of policy-relevance if it views it to be consistent with its own estimations of what constitutes national interests. The idea of national interest based upon notions of singularity and indisputability; is what organises the formulation of state objectives. The subjectivist argument dissociates the state from its broadly acknowledged abstract conceptualisation and ascribes intentionality of action to the individuals and collectives that constitute it. This critique of objectivity claims underlying state interests, therefore posits that the only way to uncover what people need and want is to assume that their requirements and aspirations are reflected in the actions of the state policy makers.

State actions formulated around considerations of national interests take precedence over more immediate concerns associated with a particular issue or conflict. Localised issues or conflicts are often appropriated by the state through a re-articulation of its potential implications as having direct impacts on its national interests. In doing so, the state removes the local conflict from the specificities of its operation which are shaped by the dynamics of its immediate spatiality. Bringing an issue/conflict under the exclusive domain of state action removes any space for engagement with local narratives or elements of participation in addressing the same. The state dissociates issues from its specific contingencies and places it within a homogenous fold of perception and action, based on fixed considerations of its national interests. This subsumption detaches the

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issue from the socio-cultural specificities and other underlying nuances of its spatial reality, by merging it with the state's abstraction of what it considers as a necessary plane of action. Engagements based on statist essentialisms therefore often fail to address the precise conditions and factors contributing to the existence or persistence of 'local' conflicts, the immediate repercussions of which are also spatially contained. Policies which dictate relations amongst nations tend to be based upon narrowly defined national interests where local narratives find close to no representation at all (Autesserre, 2006). As a result, conflicts, or potential fault lines of conflict at the local level, which can exist in the form of intra-regional conflict or as opposition to the state, remain unaddressed and in this manner, are sustained as well (Walter, 2003).

Such an approach reduces any issue to those aspects which the state considers as fundamental to the determination or preservation of its interests, thereby confining its scope of action to its interpretation of an issue. This becomes apparent with regard to the understanding of complex social phenomena like conflicts which are often reductively interpreted and assessed in terms of identifiable facets, in consonance with the state's credo. Addressing an issue/conflict by identifying potential facets of engagement based on considerations of national interests, carries the potential of transforming it into an exercise in inductive justification of state action or inaction. In some cases, issues are prioritised because of the necessity to heighten it to a level where state intervention or action is justified; regardless of whether there exists the necessity for such an escalation or not. It is only prioritised, if changes in the circumstances of a conflicts' subsistence render engagement as vital to the preservation of the state and its interests. In the case of

a transnational conflict, it is this shared stake that functions as the basis of collaborative frameworks adjusted to addressing relevant concerns surrounding the same.

To extend the understanding of the border beyond statist perceptions requires it to be viewed as a dynamic space, textured by interactions between the state and the inhabitants of these spaces. Their interactions are not always defined by the power differential that rests with the state, but also in the local's ability to negotiate modulations brought forth through the regulation of the circumstances and necessities underlying its marginalised existence. Evidently, the dichotomies that exist between the rigid territorialisation of the border and its regulation by the state and the ever-changing demands for mobility and transactions of people on either side of the border, has often manifested in reconfigurations of the borderland local. These local adaptations in responding to the exigencies of its own geographical context vis-à-vis states' immiscible categories of identities and permissible mobilities is revealing of how borders exist in obverse to uniform and unchanging conceptualisations of the same. The relevance of borders in contemporary times, have come to be defined by notions of access and restrictions against mobilities, which in turn subsequently define ideas of belonging and alienation. At the state level, such exclusions are further reinforced by the presence and operation of laws and regulations which define the conditions of belongingness, affiliation, and participation. The heightened securitisation of these spaces intended to maintain state's impenetrability, also works to regulate, or restrict the interdependence and mutuality that border, and borderland processes, practices and dynamics are to a large extent shaped by (Chatterjee & Sen, 2019).

The relationality between national and local framings at the borders determines the continued presence of the state within such contested spaces, and the latter, representative of the daily routines that constitute the lives and livelihoods of its inhabitants, often carried out in a manner that is incongruous with the state's understanding of the limits of its territorial authority. From the perspective of the 'local', these conditions may not be viewed in the same vein as it is in the nationalist interpretation. For them, it may constitute quotidian necessities and negotiations associated with life within such contested, liminal spaces. From the state's perspective, these activities and identities are only legitimised through its own attribution of consent for the same, through the legitimisation of these spaces, its inhabitants, and their lives through its conferred identification. Any activity or identity that goes beyond the limits of the state's conferred limits to mobilities or identification is prohibited regardless of their established historical provenance. Gathering an understanding of these 'local' issues and their position within the states' narratives towards their resolution should enable us to understand the implications of such appropriations and adaptations at the levels of the local and the state. Critically analysing assessments of conflict at borders and subsequent policies for their resolution reveals a pattern of obscurantism. The 'local', constituted of interactive and interpretive frameworks which effect the actions and choices of its constituent actors is overlooked as a key element in these statist assessments of conflict.

The component of the local, encompassing the relationships and perceptions of its actors therefore becomes a necessary inclusion in analyses of spatiality. However, given that statist policies towards the management of its borders are largely exhorted upon considerations of its national interests, localised issues and conflicts are frequently

represented under suppositions of the possible implications of their existence, or persistence, on the fulfilment of its aims. Subsequently, the persistence of border issues beyond their resolution is commonly viewed through the extension of the problematic of its territorial existence at the limit of the state and the systemic bearings of its liminality. At the same time, state apperception of progressive change at the local level remains confined to the restrictive impacts its intervention chiefly brings forth in halting recursions. These assessments are based on a mere recognition of new policies or strategies implemented by the state, limited to only the ends it seeks to address. However, in recognising progressive change at the local level, one also needs to account for the changes that state-action has had on the lives of the local population. Such an analysis will view the 'local' not only as the object of state-action, but as an ever-changing category, constituted of individuals and processes borne out of reiterated practices, adapting to the changing circumstances brought forth by the state's interpolation. The borderland therefore becomes an important site for studying the interactions between the state and the local, as opposed to its unqualified acceptance within statist discourses as the territorialised limits of its powers. The dynamics of interactions and contestations underlining the continuum of state-local engagements at the border is revealing of the perpetuity of such processes (Grassiani & Swinkels, 2014). The spatial variegations underlying such processes also becomes a relevant point of engagement in understanding the different ways in which the state's power as manifested in the borders competes with, as well as accommodates, other forms of localised power that emerge at the borderlands. Through this, the spatial category of a particular borderland locale can be outlined, replete with its own unique configurations of existence, determined by the historiography

of its existence prior and subsequent to the emergence of the modern state (Chatterjee & Sen, 2019), and the emergence of conditions of conflict.

The identification of what constitutes an important issue to be addressed bilaterally, therefore, becomes dependent on the presence of factor(s), complementary to realisation of the participatory states' national interests. When the practicalities of bilateralism are based on considerations of furthering a state's national interests, it becomes only a limited rendering of the concept. The exclusion of the 'local' from discussions on conflict resolution through bilateralism inhibits a comprehensive appraisal of any issue it seeks to engage with. The arrogation of a 'local' issue by the state therefore often comes to be based on notions of what constitutes national interest, rather than immediate necessity of its resolution at the local level. The entire issue comes to be represented through a centrally articulated discourse based upon the state's identification of the underlying, causative factors. Thereby, predicating state engagement in conflicts on putative notions of effective benefits towards the fulfilment of state interests, rather than on engagement with local narratives and concerns regarding its management in augmenting 'local' capacities and resources available to confront transformations brought forth by an ensuing conflict (Fisher et. al 2000, p. 69). Such tendencies are especially prevalent at the border where the sovereignty of the nation state is continually challenged and reinforced (Donnan & Wilson, 1999, p. 9; Flynn, 1997).

The centrality of borders in understanding the practicalisation of state sovereignty (Murayama, 2006), which constitutes a fundamental pillar of state security, constitutes a sufficient rationalisation for the imposition of an exclusivist discourse in their management, in a more pronounced way than any other sphere of state authority. An

unintended outcome of this has been the de-prioritisation of the 'local' as an animate construct, whereby the dynamics of interaction amongst groups and individuals constituting it define conditions for both cooperation and conflict; determined by the equivalence or incongruence of interests, within a competitive environment of limited tangible and intangible resources. A comprehensive understanding of the 'local', especially in the context of the borderland, should ideally transcend discussions drawn from the prism of its management by the state.

Local Impacts of Bilateral Mediation at the India-Bangladesh Border

The India-Bangladesh border enclaves[3] featured as a prominent issue in their bilateral relationship. The complexities of envisioning solutions to bypass their geographical dislocation from the state positioned their exchange the most viable option[4]. Two factors contributed significantly towards impeding a solution at a bilateral level. Firstly, its conflation with matters related to the un-demarcated sections of their border and the sharing of *Teesta* river water often resulted in a mismatch of outcomes at a bilateral level. Secondly, the mobilisation of issues of unregulated and illegal immigrations as 'political capital' in support of more stringent border regulations,

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[3] An enclave is a portion of territory surrounded entirely or enclosed by foreign dominions. The first mention of the term in the English language appeared in the year 1868. The term was used to define a portion of territory that was entirely surrounded by foreign dominions. The word however, through its figurative and transferred usages has come to denote a vast array of social, economic and political configurations which allude to a sense of detachment from its original and primary referent.

[4] The inflexible attitude towards extension of governance beyond borders in South Asia is a consequence of the enacting of sovereignty through the delineation of national territory (Murayama, 2006). This postcolonial push towards rationalizing territorial limits, grounded on defined limitations of the spatiality of state power and authority was clearly observable in such assertions. The proposal of exchange of the enclaves, I argue, was gauged with this underlying assumption which concealed the demand for an empirical and situationally determined course of engagement.

echoing nationalistic assertions over territories across the border. As a result of a culmination of these factors, the enclave issue remained unresolved; until 2011, when the Protocol to the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) was signed between India and Bangladesh. In India, the process was marked by tussles between the central government, regional political parties and local informal aggregations from states which stood to be directly affected by the proposed exchange. The opposition's narrative challenged the LBA's underlying requirement of alteration of national territory, which stood in violation of the basic structure of Constitution[5]. The 119th Constitutional Amendment Bill which sought to ratify the LBA was introduced in the *Rajya Sabha* or Upper House in 2013, but failed to garner majority assent. A change in leadership at the Centre in 2014[6] prompted a re-introduction of the same Bill in the Parliament which was passed by both Houses in 2015. The Bill successfully amended the First Schedule of the Constitution, which paved the way for the exchange of enclaves and its resident populations (GOI: MEA, 2011).

In India, narratives signifying loss of national territory were frequently lobbied by those opposed to the transfer. At the local level, these narratives trickled down to rouse resident populations (both enclave and non-enclave communities) against the transfer, by projecting it as a consolatory yielding of territory to another state. For Bangladesh, the resolution process was for the most part an exercise in perseverance. Progress towards a settlement at the bilateral level was overturned by India's inability to secure a

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[5] The attempt to alter national territory would impact upon the state's exercise of sovereignty, which constituted one of the fundamental principles of the Indian Constitution. Thus it could not be achieved through a simple amendment.

[6] The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which came to power in the Indian Parliament had in fact previously opposed national attempts at bilateral resolution through exchange, and the ceding territory to Bangladesh.

Parliamentary majority on requisite legislations and amendments, on several occasions. However, factors unrelated to the transfer acted as a linchpin in the alignment of interests between the two countries on resolving issues related to exchange of enclaves. This shift in stance of the Indian state on the LBA can be attributed to the incumbent government's push for eastward integration as a counterbalance to China's growing regional influence. For Bangladesh, the benefits of a secure border with India, and developing itself as an access point into Southeast Asia were the major national considerations in backing the ratification of the Agreement. A bilateral approach enabled both countries to pursue their respective national interests within a framework of mutually relayed benefits and securities. Notwithstanding the positive impacts of its implementation by the states, certain persistent local issues point towards deficient engagement with the spatial configurations of social, economic and political structures of the locales that stood to be directly affected by the process.

Regional perceptions of territoriality recognised enclaves as spatial aberrations existing in a classificatory struggle within Westphalian frameworks of spatial organisation[7]. Postcolonial notions of territoriality operational in the region[8] may be adopted as a

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[7] The unit of a nation state as the primary referent in the theorisation and translation of rational, bounded territories, and state geodesy, came to inform popular imaginings of the organisation of national space (Rejai & Enloe, 1969; Baud & Schendel, 2003; Barkin & Cronin, 1994). The attribution of significance to such notions transformed the idea of the state with its demarcated boundaries into an assumed normativity in the imagining of territorial units in the modern postcolonial context; subsequently rendering any exception to the norm, as anomalous (Thomassen, 2012). As an outcome, states began to focus their efforts towards rationalizing their borders and palliate unclassifiable existences such as enclaves, adverse possessions, and disputed territories in an increasingly defined and bounded international and regional geopolitical space (Shewly, 2013; van Schendel, 2002; Pant, 2007; Pattanaik, 2011; Mishra, 2008).

[8] The history of the subcontinent holds a key to understanding this reliance on spatiality as an enactor of sovereign power. The end of colonial rule initiated the process of territorial decolonisation whereby a large and singularly administered territory was broken up into and later consolidated into the nation

framework for understanding the prioritisation of the transfer of enclaves and the provision of citizenship to its inhabitants as the foremost instruments of settlement. These steps were anticipated to initiate the process of organising their respective borders in accordance with modern theorisations of territoriality, predicated on precise limitations of the spatiality of state authority. Correspondingly, it sought to jettison the possibility of the extension of state authority beyond its borders in governing these enclaves. The discernment of a probable solution was derived from notions of territoriality which were incongruent with local framings, textured by critical cross-border contestations and associations between and amongst enclave and non-enclave populations across the border, and the state. The interlinking of the enclave issue with the political leitmotifs of territoriality and citizenship had significant impacts on the local construction of the issue, which was the space in which the transactional directives of the bilateral agreement were operationalised. The state's articulation of the issue solely on considerations of territoriality and citizenship, limited the scope for engagement with other narratives surrounding the issue that were present at the local level. Local articulations of grievances, although varied; were lent a discernible form by national and state narratives opposed to the exchange. Opinions from different local milieus were subsequently classified under broad-stroke assertions either in support of or opposition to the exchange. This discernible categorisation of local opinions is indicative of the impact of

states which constitute the region today. The process of territorial reorganisation ran parallel to a reconstruction of regional colonial historiography. The fragmentation of a South Asian historiography into separate narratives, retrofitted to form an exclusive nationalist agenda of these newly independent states, came to define their own particularistic discourses on citizenship, nationalism and identity and territory. The issue of territory with its own specific set of particularities, in terms of organisation and reconfiguration and the politics surrounding it, require it to be viewed from a historical perspective. The melding of a nationalist rhetoric to the same renders such conflicts and issues highly contentious and therefore difficult to resolve.

national interpretations on the assessment of issues at disaggregated levels of perception and engagement. These local perspectives on the transfer have differed amongst its multiple replications within and across the same spatiality. The focus on integration of enclaves and its people as a viable solution towards the assuagement of their statelessness and its assumed deprivations failed to account for issues of identity, and association (both territorial and notional), and whether these communities constituted a part of their immediate locale.

The implications of the presence of stateless spaces such as enclaves range beyond their spatial limits to impact upon local socio-spatial configurations. Their statelessness impacted upon and defined not only intra-enclave dynamics, but interactions with non-enclave locales as well. The condition of their isolation and the absence of the state, and its impacts on a space and its people can only be understood in comparison to spaces where the state existed (read, non-enclave locales). Therefore, critical evaluations of enclaves need to be predicated on their position within the larger national space encompassing the immediate locale in which they are embedded, instead of in isolation. The absence of the state therefore does not necessarily correspond with isolation from the geographical state, or the potential growth and progress it may be unable to realise in the absence of governance, but a separation from its regulatory capacities. Therefore, predicating the integration of enclaves on their presumed deprivation and isolation from the state, and by extension formal processes of governance posits a necessary stage for critical re-evaluation. As an outcome of measures constituted as such, integration of enclaves has been confined to the geographic/territorial level alone. This is an outcome of the primacy accorded to the state as the foremost organiser of socio-economic relations

and interactions. Integration into a 'national' space thus, should go beyond considerations of territoriality and identifying individuals as citizens, in order to bring forth assimilation of territories and communities at the local level. Ideally, it should establish processes conducive to assimilation amongst previously separated locales and communities, by introducing policies which account for and legitimise local dynamics of interaction prior to integration. Integration as a measure should therefore focus on communities inhabiting these territories as the subject of policy, and appropriately reinforce the processes that constitute their quotidian interactions.

Prior to integration into their respective national territories, enclaves existed as stateless spaces. These portions of territory, belonging to one state, were rendered ungovernable because of their encircling by the territory of another. However, the statelessness of these spaces did not constitute an insurmountable barrier for its inhabitants. Enclave residents relied on interactions with the local population; comprising primarily of non-enclave local residents to circumvent their statelessness, and to secure basic requirements for subsistence. These local networks of interactions and exchanges were grounded on a shared dependence between the enclave and non-enclave populations. The enclave communities were dependent on these informal networks for the validation of their assertions for equal recognition as local citizens. Correspondingly, the non-enclave populations were reliant on the former's support in protests against the transfer of enclave land to Bangladesh. Although an inequitable dependence, given the persistence of locally operating differentiations based on citizenship till 2015, local modes of intervention and participation had substantially steadied the uncertainties associated with the enclaves' stateless existence till their bilateral exchange.

The exchange of the enclaves between India and Bangladesh was followed by the state conferring citizenship to its inhabitants. Their integration into the state's fold shifted the management of claims surrounding the validation of identity, assertions over resources and solicitations for social and spatial mobilities (Canefe, 2019), from local social capital networks to the ambits of state formality. As an outcome, the conditional and negotiated authority the non-enclave residents exercised over their immediate locale, as the informal purveyors of such benefits, began to contract. The elimination of this singular aspect of dependence of the enclave populations on non-enclave locals for welfares, securities, and validations, contributed towards the fragmentation of the latter's social hegemony, that was structured on their identity as state citizens, a recognition that has appeared to carry weighty implications at the local level, when viewed in contrast to the stateless identities of the enclave inhabitants who together constituted the locale. This has had resounding impacts at the local level, following the enclaves' integration in 2015. The state's dwindling involvement in a rehabilitative capacity has revealed the significance of the presence of these local armatures of support, that were constituted on the basis of the non-enclave locals' ability to extend and sublet comparable privileges of citizenship to the stateless residents of these enclaves. These local transferences of legitimacy of identity and belonging were extended by virtue of the non-enclave locals by virtue of their proximity to the state and its institutions.

Observations from the field necessitate a reconfiguration of prevalent discourses on enclaves which have essentially remained limited to engagement set in binaries of statelessness and citizenship. However, interactions between the enclaves and other non-enclave locales point towards an idea of citizenship which is not restricted to rigid

categories of association and participation defined by the state. The way these statist frameworks are circumvented and often subverted, through negotiations at the local, informal level of interactions has constituted a key point of engagement of critical scholarship on borderlands. The geopolitical tripartite of bordering, ordering and othering (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002) which manifests in the form of formal border producing policies, popular narratives on belonging, anxieties related to the 'other' often impact upon and upturn localised framings of belonging or territoriality based on an older history of shared mobilities and interactions and therefore emerges as a critical point of engaging with the local. To study the enclaves as dissociated from its geographical and social locale would amount to an obfuscation of their history of existence prior to state intervention. This position is assumptive of statelessness as an absolute and insurmountable gulf which can only be reversed through integration. Thereby, it is necessary to depart from such conceptualisations of the enclaves and situate them as an integral part of their locale and analyse them in the context of their historical and contemporary interactions with non-enclave spaces and later with the state. Such an understanding will highlight the interactions (both cooperative and conflictual) amongst enclave and non-enclave locals, in navigating shared complexities, albeit specifically rooted to their own distinct realities of existence within a space of regulated mobilities and the changes these processes have undergone after 2015.

The tendency to rely on statist historical perspectives to understand the spatial and social marginalisation of the enclave space can be attributed to how dominant narratives of

1947 and 1971[9] have obscured its impacts on lesser visible spaces and the experiences of local borderland communities. Such apperceptions very reductively position enclaves as extensions of the state, existing in suspended animation, its history only commencing upon its integration into national territory. The acceptance of such transpositions precludes any inquiries into the evolution of the local *chhitmohol*[10] into the state enclave. In doing so, it disregards in its categorisation, the history of interactions and interdependencies that existed between these spaces and other locales through its changing categorisations and identifications (Chaturvedi, 2000), especially in terms of the understandings of its statelessness. The unqualified position of the state, especially at the border, prompts one to understand its absence in absolute terms as well. However, such perceptions, which have structured state engagement with the enclaves through their integration, fail to account for the presence of social and economic configurations that structured local relations in the borderlands and in this context, allowed the enclave residents to bypass their perceived statelessness amongst other adaptations. This dissonance is an outcome of the blip in the locale's history created by the state through its entry into these spaces. The centrality of the state in discourses on territoriality falls short of accounting for the presence of anomalous and unclassifiable existences (Baud & van Schendel, 2003) such as enclaves prior to their absorption through the state's territorialisation. As an outcome, the enclave's history in statist narratives only

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[9] The Partition of British India created the independent states of India and Pakistan in 1947. The latter's dominion constituted a geographically separated territorial unit with an eastern extension which later emerged as the independent country of Bangladesh following the Liberation War of 1971, which culminated in the form of armed rebellion against West Pakistan's control due to progressively deteriorating relations between the two extensions, founded on the prepollency of the Urdu speaking western wing over the Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan.

[10] The word *chhit* denotes a speck; and *mohol*, a unit of division of land estates used locally around these regions. Together, they form the locally used portmanteau used to describe these spaces.

commence after their integration, prior to which their statelessness rendered them unto a referential void viewed to extend to the empirics of their existence as well.

Understandings of territoriality operational in the newly decolonised South Asian states viewed enclaves through the framework of its detachment and dissociation from the state. Such classifications emphasised an isolated existence from the Westphalian nation state (Pounds, 1972; Norris & Haring, 1980; Glassner, 1996). As a result, attempts towards understanding the impacts of their existential circumstances have focused primarily on the perceived impacts of this detachment (Pattanaik, 2011). Such a perspective broadly underlined the bilateral effort towards their exchange between the governments of India and Bangladesh in 2015. The possibility of extending governance beyond state borders as a means of integrating the enclaves was never a policy consideration since the operation of sovereignty in South Asia has been inextricably linked to the notion of territoriality. In viewing the existence of issues and conflicts in these spaces in terms of their isolation from the state, such perceptions, and subsequently grounded engagements, detached the enclaves from the locale of its existence, thereby introducing statelessness as a facet of engagement, and integration and citizenship as solutions for the same. Construals as such require critical assessment as they fail to account for the existence of the local as dynamic socio-cultural and political spaces and the agency of its inhabitants (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Mason & Rychard, 2005; Schmidt, 1990) whose interactions have shaped its history prior to the state's history. The sociality of the enclave space was shaped by the relations amongst its inhabitants as well as in interaction with non-enclave locals, to adapt to their circumstances of existence both before and after the advent of the modern Indian state.

In that regard, the stateless enclaves represent a notional disjuncture from the more locally embedded *chhitmohols* since the understanding of statelessness only comes to the fore with the establishment of the state in 1947 and with that its own territorial configurations of power and its identification of constitutive demographics. State mediations could thus be viewed to be based on the assumed vulnerability of the enclave populations in its absence of governance and recognition. Their statelessness was viewed as absolute, thereby prioritising their integration into the state as the foremost solution. Statist construals viewed the enclaves in terms of perceived notions of enforced incapacitation in response to the circumstances of their stateless existence. It falls short of accounting for the presence of other channels of management, organisation and control that existed and functioned at the local level, or which were created out of recursive local interdependencies preceding the state's entry.

Analysis on enclaves therefore falls short of engaging with these obscured histories which positions them as embedded within their immediate locale despite their statelessness. These exclusions from statist framings of history and territoriality also preclude any consideration of the impacts of the subcontinent's decolonisation and the emergence of new states in creating new forms of interdependence between enclaves and other locales. This dislocation from regional historiography and its abrupt inclusion upon integration has averted engagements based upon the enclaves' position within a patchwork of multiple, cross-cutting local histories. The inability to account for historical and cultural moorings connecting individuals and spaces divided by limits of territorial sovereignty has undergirded most modern border making practices. In the case of the India-Bangladesh border enclaves, their statelessness has been viewed to exist in an

absolute manner and against the assumed historical eternality of the state itself. The enclaves' statelessness therefore came to signify something beyond an official categorisation of their territorial status, to encompass their subsequent exclusion from the borderland's historiography.

Necessities of Local Engagement

The concentration of power at the political centre and its spatial and notional distance from the peripheries can often be traced through an analysis of the impacts of state action in such areas. The selection of areas of bilateral engagement is made on an assessment of the potential impacts of the pursuit/forfeiture of issues and their implications on the state's pursuit of its national interests. Such a conceptualisation limits the scope for engagement to those aspects which the state considers fundamental to the fulfilment of its interests. This becomes apparent with regard to complex socio-cultural phenomenon like conflicts whereby state involvement becomes limited to particular facets of its existence, induced through the lens of its own credo of interests[11]. Addressing an issue/conflict through the inductive justification of state action or inaction, may be viewed in contrast to the need for comprehensive engagement at the local level aimed towards instituting progressive changes in the conditions of an issue/conflict's existence and the relationships of its actors.

This establishes a possibility whereby local issues may be overlooked unless considered/viewed to be related to the states' national interests. Prioritisation of local

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[11] Often areas of action are identified not on the basis of immediate concerns for engagement, but appropriated because of the potential they hold in terms of furthering national interests; a view that has been frequently lobbied in criticism of the state's authority to securitise.

issues is preceded by a reconfigured interpretation of the circumstances of its existence by the state, rendering engagement vital to the pursuit of its interests. In the case of transnational conflicts/issues, it is this shared interest that functions as the basis of establishing collaborative frameworks. Such has been observable in India-Bangladesh bilateralism on the issue of exchanging their border enclaves. At this point, it is essential to acknowledge that the resolution of the enclave issue required bilateral intervention since it necessitated the transfer of territories and populations across an international border. However, local perceptions towards the exchange appear to be absent from the considerations of state action towards this end.

Although the LBA may be studied to understand regional factors contributing to successful bilateral cooperation, its ranges of engagement must be considered in such analyses. Besides the formal recognition of the enclave residents as citizens and enclave land as national territory, conflicts and vulnerabilities associated with their erstwhile statelessness persists at the local level in India even today. The emphasis on the provision of citizenship and territorial status did not bring forth substantial local transformations, barring the insertion of the state and its institutions as the primary purveyors of benefits and mobilities, previously negotiated informally by local actors. The prevalence of a 'national' interpretation of a 'local' issue in attributing singular emphasis on the provision of citizenship and exchange of territories as a means to resolve their continuing statelessness, glossed over local contestations which existed as a result of it. The lack of dialogical engagement between the 'local' and the 'national' was evident in the absence of issues of identity; territorial and notional association with their locale, and the economic, social and political struggles of the enclave residents, from the LBA's scope of

action. At the bilateral level, the states' essentialised perusal of the enclave conflict took precedence; and often, such understandings tend to be detached from localised construal of conflicts and subsequent engagements with its extant circumstances (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Mason & Rychard, 2005; Schmidt, 1990). The assessment of the issue from a national interest perspective overlooked the need to address vulnerabilities that were a direct outcome of the enclaves' isolation. A national interest-oriented approach often de-necessitates the need for addressing issues in consonance with specificities of its spatial context of operation (Thomassen, 2012). The persistence of contestations at the local level following the exchange problematises the state's construal of resolution in this regard, in confining its scope to the ascription of citizenship and exchange of territories.

The exclusion of 'local' narratives from discussions on localised issues considered relevant in national or bilateral contexts, leads one to question the viability of state-driven resolution processes. In the enclaves' case, its associated localised conflicts which lay beyond the scope of its bilateral resolution, continues to persist, and impact upon local exchanges and relations. Not accounting for the 'local' in the construal and articulation of the enclave issue produced an incomplete understanding upon which bilateral intervention was centred. It appeared absent of considerations of how local socialities would react to or interact with the changes it would actuate at these disaggregated levels of interaction/perception. These deliberations are generally viewed to lie beyond the scope of policy bilateralism and more adjusted to the jurisdiction of national governance. For instance, specific localised grievances surrounding loss of land as a result of fencing, acceptance of new entrants and growing competition of dwindling resources and opportunities were unaccounted for in the bilateral agreement, and now exist as localised

concerns. As a result, perceptions surrounding the transfer and its outcomes, as discussed previously, have been variable across non-enclave locales since the LBA's impacts across different local socialities have also varied depending upon the intensity and scope of consequential impacts encountered.

The persistence of political and social uncertainty in these erstwhile enclave spaces can be understood in the context of the linearity with which 'resolution' had been defined and implemented through a bilateral agreement. Such an understanding needs to be stripped of all of its conceptual bindings in order to estimate the probable extension of its applicability beyond the perceived culmination of a conflict. In the context of modern-day conflicts, the preponderance of the nation state as the primary arbiter in resolution processes distances the entire exercise of peace-making from the collectives directly affected by such a decision. The peace and stability founded on such conceptualisations of resolution have therefore been unable to establish a situation where the conflict is clearly reconciled, and the entire conflictual situation undergoes a process of progressive transformation. This is because; generalised forms of resolution are often based on understandings that fail to account for the varying perceptions operating within a conflict, in attempting to reconcile the multiple narratives that contribute towards its prolongation (Drexler, 2007). The semantics of resolution are oftentimes rendered normative (Autesserre, 2006) in its determination of fixed objectives, rather than ones adjustable to transformations in conditions it seeks to address. This is reflective of the power differential that lies with the nation state or other intervening actors in authorising processes of resolution. Their stakes vary from those of local actors in that, the former is

primarily grounded on the attainment of its policy objectives, whereas for the latter it lies in adjusting to resultant flux or stasis in their settings.

The state's redrawing of territorial boundaries and reorganisation of populations has often been predicated on disputable assumptions about the relationships between people and the space they occupy. The state's perspective on the management of populations and spaces existing in opposition with its philosophies of constitutive demography and rationalised geography has positioned spaces as simply ampoules; not accounting for how the same is shaped by the social relations of its inhabitants. The prominence of the state at its borders comes to dominantly regulate local, social relations along similar lines in its efforts towards managing this spatiality. In its attempt at ironing out a seventy-year-old issue based around conflicting ideas of national identity and territory, the state overlooked the role of local actors in the process. At the same time, the lack of state involvement in the enclaves after 2015 and the local adaptation in addressing resultant transformations, suggests that although power and sanction for change flowed through the state its primary enactors were situated at the local level. Even before the implementation of the LBA in 2015, local actors negotiated in collaboration across enclave and non-enclave locales to bypass the complexities of life faced collectively as a consequence of their geographical reality and its multiple configurations of identities and connexions. The treatment of local spaces, populations and institutions as mere recipients of policy, distances states from engaging with the same in understanding the issue or conflict it seeks to address in the first place, through the course of its engagement till a possible settlement is arrived at.

Engaging with bilateral relations through 'national' narratives tends to overlook the necessity to engage with local issues through 'local' narratives. Based upon this, strategies for engagement are subsequently devised at the 'national' levels of the cooperating states in tune with their specific national interest objectives (Jamwal, 2004). This is more prevalent in the context of border or boundary issues. The exercise of unqualified authority with regard to the maintenance and regulation of the border and its associated issues or conflicts have been widely accepted as practical corollaries of the state. However, as this study elucidates, the engagement with border issues and conflicts within a framework of bilateral cooperation generally ensues on the basis of national interests. The identification of factors determining the possibility for bilateral engagement, therefore, becomes dependent on the presence of conditions, complimentary to the participatory states' national interests. Simply put, the settlement of a particular issue has to either directly or indirectly further the national interests of the two collaborating states. The furtherance of national interests may be a direct outcome of the resolution of the outstanding issue; or the settlement may itself be a precondition, or a first step towards the realisation of the two states' national interests.

When the practicalities of bilateralism are based on considerations of furthering a state's national interests, it is capable of producing only a limited rendering of the concept. The exclusion of the 'local' from discussions on conflict resolution through bilateralism inhibits a comprehensive appraisal of any issue it seeks to engage with. This partial interpretation then constitutes the foundations upon which its addressability through state action is determined. Subsequently, issues are seldom examined or engaged with in their entirety, with certain contributing elements prioritised over others on the basis of their

perceived position of relevance within a states' national discourse. Identifying a scope to engage with bilateralism in a more comprehensive manner, through engagement with local narratives alongside the states' readings of the issue opens up a possibility of an alternative discourse. The focus therefore needs to be on including perspectives which were previously not recognised within the framework of the concept. In fact, engaging with bilateralism from the perspective of the 'local' may have implications on its functioning and effectiveness as a means of conflict management, even in the context of localised border conflicts, by making it more broad ranging in terms of its applicability as an interpretive and practical framework of state action.

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Chapter 2

Local *Chhitmohols* and State Enclaves: An Exploration of Local Histories, Perceptions of Isolation, Impacts of Bilateral Intercession

Local Experiences and Negotiations of the Borderland

To gather a comprehensive understanding of the enclave dispute, the research makes a necessary foray into the details of local experiences in navigating through the conditional existences and identities the presence of such spatial configurations have given rise to. This serves as a point of critical interlocution to offset statist essentialisms which have predominantly impacted upon popular understandings of these spaces as well as perceptions of how their stateless existence impacted upon the lives of its inhabitants. These local experiences, at the same time, cannot be dissociated from the overarching considerations of state power that is prevalent at the borders, and more specifically from the historiography of the South Asian borderland. In situating the enclave issue within the discourse of South Asian borders and bordering practices of its modern regional states, considerations of their bearing on determining the nature of relations shared by states with a common border (Starr & Thomas 2005), their varied configuration of socio-cultural identities – an outcome of the region's existence as a conduit for migration – congruity of shared historical experiences between local communities (Banerjee, 2002) emerge as relevant points of inquiry. The root of extant localised and bilateral issues,

disputes and conflicts associated with the enclaves can be traced back to the indiscriminate policies of border production and imposition spanning the colonial period to more contemporary phases of the region's history.

The state-led processes of territorial demarcation in South Asia acquired limited consideration of concerns such as demographic and cultural contiguities and shared historical and lived experiences of borderland communities (Gilmartin, 1998). The imposition of a visible, material boundary only reinforced the socially and politically manufactured rhetoric of differences between communities and the *otherisation* of those beyond the border. Consequently, communities which had existed as a distinct collective, fractured along the delimitations and regulatory frameworks of the enforced border. The instrumentalisation of historical claims and nationalist rhetoric by the state to justify its incorporation of liminal groups and territories resulted in the erosion of local notions of commonality and shared practices of interdependence (Kaviraj, 2005). The state through the exercise of its power then emerges as the principal attributor of the moral and constitutional identities of belonging and membership upon its populaces. As a result, communities which had in the past existed within a broader matrix of local interactions and exchanges despite their innate dissimilarities and incongruences now came to be detached from their commonly acknowledged social, economic, and political ends (Baud & van Schendel, 1997). Channels of reliance and interdependence between different communities were also ruptured as a result, and exchanges and interactions came to be subsumed under formal state policies which imposed limitations in terms of the extent and scope of engagement shared between communities and individuals (Lorber, 1999).

With the establishment of borders in the region following its decolonisation[12]; the identity, sense of belonging, and means of subsistence of the inhabitants of these liminal spaces came to be framed in terms of mobilities and interactions that were either permitted or prohibited under these regulations of the new postcolonial states.

The conditions of legality and legitimacy that undergird local lives and life processes are textured by the state's classificatory and functional grouping of certain conditions that determine the validity of the same. Even if such practices exhibit historical provenance, it may be invalidated based on the prepollency of state interests and its ethos. The eternality of state interests and authority is given precedence over the proven historicity of interactions and processes, stands in opposition to local histories, and positions the state at the forefront of local history. State primacy in such explications trace the beginning of local history to the point of its entry and therefore only engages with the history of its 'citizens', irrespective of their existence as local societies prior to its arrival[13]. The intervention of the state in this context can be viewed to be disruptive of recursive local processes of interactions and conflicts, as it fundamentally alters the dynamics of local actor-scapes. In certain instances, it may even lead to the creation of new fault-lines of conflict in the context of the changed circumstances of the local, subsequent to state involvement. The emergence of local conflicts as such points towards the presence of an

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[12] The intensification of the Indian national movement during the final years of the Second World War led to the emergence of independent, regional nation states after the end of the War in 1945, following British retreat from the subcontinent.

[13] This becomes apparent in the practices such as enumeration of population, a practice that was introduced by the British colonial government in South Asia, still carried on as a standard function of most modern states today. Often viewed as a means through which a community is attributed a legitimate position within the state, upon being accounted for and categorised.

established social hierarchy at the local level[14], and a social system textured by such localised considerations of power which underline the relationship between its constituent actors. Local 'conflicts' can therefore exist outside of their classification by the state, but the historicity of a particular issue in statist perceptions is often established at the juncture of its classification. In doing so, the conflict conditions are detached from the influences of its local settings and instead viewed from perspectives detached from its historicity. This precludes considerations of local adaptations that steadied challenging circumstances and reveals underlying subjectivities in the categorisation of certain localised situations as 'conflicts' necessitating state intervention. Borderlands therefore emerge as sites of contestation between rigid statist culture and rhetoric and localised adaptations (Flynn, 1997). The mobilities, identifications and livelihood practices of borderland inhabitants are often dependent on informal and 'illegal' cross-border interactions that contravene statist perceptions of 'impermeable' territoriality derived from intransigent conceptualisations of the reach of its sovereign authority. At the same time, the liminal nature of these spaces allows the state to assume a position of heightened control over their regulation, and in delimiting categorisations of local identities, and limitations to access and mobility. The state's unqualified authority is

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[14] According to Lewis A. Coser (1957), it is not the conflict itself that invites movements for structural change, but the overall rigidity of the system which makes them susceptible to only dynamic, systemic change often brought forth through open conflict. In contrast, societies which are loosely structured are more accommodating of minor changes which establish stability in relationships between its key components as well as within the multiple structurations of power they exist within. Following from this, the group which is positioned in upper levels of these social hierarchies exhibit higher levels of resistance towards movements for mobility. The very presence of a scope of mobility therefore gives motivation for conflict, which can be illustrated by the new inequalities that have emerged between the enclave and non-enclave locals, previously circumvented through cooperative interactions.

justified only on the basis of the notional relevance of the borderland as the limits at which its power is continually challenged and reinforced. The lives of borderland inhabitants then come to be subjected to the realisation of the fictionalised eternality of orderly spatial imagination, in ironing out the historicity of interactions and interdependencies with communities across the frontiers under the neat re-conceptualisations of national territory and identity.

The study identifies the India-Bangladesh border and its enclaves as a referential to understand the perceptive disruptions in the popular imagination that represents borders as clear and stable lines of demarcation of the limits of state power and its separation from other similar units. Within such a landscape of exploration, the presence of complex territorial categories, such as enclaves, further disrupt the perceptions of an uninterrupted and bounded nation (Sidaway, 2007). Given the peculiarities that these spaces represent, it is no surprise that they have not found adequate representation in the existing literature on citizenship, nationhood, and identity. This is because, in every sense, the presence of enclaves challenges the usual metrics that have come to define categories of belonging. Such classifications are usually derived from essentialisms of everyday life under the modern nation state, which establishes neatly defined categories of identity and association.

The absence of representation in existent discourse presents the opportunity to engage with these spaces from the lens of the experiences of its inhabitants in carving out an identity for themselves, based on which their struggles for state recognition and local integration played out. The history of the enclaves is one of adaptation and responding to

the transient landscape of the borderlands, textured by both local and state dynamics. The ways in which local inhabitants of these spaces have simulated state processes of identification and integration is testament to the adaptive capacity of the 'local' at the borders. One that is borne out of quotidian necessities of its inhabitants to navigate through the changing conditions of life, brought forth by the state's implementation of new policies towards the management of such liminal zones, and spaces that fall outside the state's homogenised and uniform rubric of its territorial configurations. What distinctively framed the lived experiences of the enclave inhabitants is the fact that they had to navigate through not only the challenges of liminality that manifest in the borderland's interaction with the state, but also in establishing their position within a local that they did not officially constitute prior to their integration. The specificities of local experiences therefore emerge as a point of departure from statist essentialisms that often tend to colour perceptions upon assumed generalisations of the machinations of state power. Based on this understanding, this chapter engages with an alternative conceptualisation of enclaves derived from local experiences; tracing the extent of their statelessness and the experiences of its inhabitants in bypassing the intrinsic limitations to their lives in an unrecognised and un-legitimised existence.

The chapter explores the variable perceptions and negotiations around the presence of 'stateless enclaves', to understand the disjuncture between statist enumerations of their existence and their localised manifestations that emerged through interactions and processes surrounding these spaces and impacted upon by common limitations. To gather an understanding derived from local experiences will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the categories delimited by the state in its resolution processes and

subsequently reveal the limitations of such renderings of spaces and categories of territory and identity that play out at the local level. This alternative framing posits a critical exploration of prevalent local conflicts in subsequent sections, which the study suggests, have persisted beyond the bilateral resolution of the enclave issue as a result of an absence of the local as a point of engagement.

Discursive and Historical Productions of the Enclave Space

The first mention of the term enclave in the English language appeared in the year 1868 (Whyte, 2002). The term was used to define a portion of territory that was entirely surrounded by foreign dominions. The word, however, through its figurative and transferred usages has come to denote a vast array of social, economic, and political configurations which allude to a sense of detachment from a primary territorial and communal referent. Its representations derived out of understandings of political geography have also been pivoted on similar notions of detachment and dissociation (Pounds, 1972; Norris & Haring, 1980; Glassner, 1996). In South Asia, the representation of enclaves classified these spaces as aberrations of territorial organisation and impediments upon the effective management of space by the nation state. These notions of enclaves as anomalies, however, only make sense when viewed against the context of the bounded nation state which came into existence with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1649. The standard watershed of the nation state as the primary referent in the theorisation and translation of rational, bounded territories, and state geodesy, came to inform popular imaginings of the organisation of national space (Rejai & Enloe, 1969; Ludden, 2003; Baud & van Schendel, 2003; Barkin & Cronin, 1994). The attribution of

significance to such notions transformed the idea of the state with its demarcated boundaries into normativity, in the imagining of territorial units in the modern postcolonial context; and subsequently rendering any exception to the norm, as anomalous (Thomassen, 2012). Contemporary representations and perceptions of enclaves, viewed against the spatial context of the bounded nation state within both academic and geopolitical discourses, have primarily been hinged on debates surrounding the final statuses of these spaces. These efforts were unilaterally directed towards rationalising their unclassifiable existence in an increasingly defined and bounded international and regional geopolitical space (Shewly, 2013; van Schendel, 2002; Pant, 2007, Pattanaik, 2011; Mishra, 2008). As a result, in their more contemporary framings, emphasis has primarily rested on notions of access, statelessness and the deprivation of basic rights of citizenship of those who inhabit these spaces.

In the case of the Indian and Bangladeshi enclaves scattered across the north-eastern sector of their borders, their origins can be traced back to the medieval history of the subcontinent. Prior to the Partition of 1947, enclaves or *chhitmohols* (as they came to be called later during the early years of British colonial rule) existed as discontinuous landholdings whose origins could be traced back to the Mughal incursions into the territory held by the local Koch kingdom in modern day Cooch Behar, situated in northern parts of the Indian state of West Bengal. The Mughal campaign was partially successful in that they were unable to dislodge from power multiple chieftains and regional overlords who owed fealty to the Koch kingdom in the regions along the frontiers of the territory they acquired through the Mughal-Koch peace treaty of 1713, namely, Boda, Patgram and Purvabhag. Because of such an irregular and uneven pattern

of territorial occupation, these spaces were enclaved within the larger Mughal territory, while still existing as alcoves of the Koch kingdom to which they owed their allegiance. Similarly, there existed discontinuous pockets of Mughal power within Koch territory that were completely enclosed on all sides (van Schendel, 2002; Cons, 2012; Shewly, 2013; Sidaway, 2007). The final status of these disputed territories was left unresolved, and they continued to exist as what was referred to in Bengali as *chhitmohols*.

The advent of colonialism saw the entire subcontinent being brought under a unified and singular scheme of administration and territorial management, which divided the large region into more easily manageable and governable units[15]. The region was divided into provinces which did not account for historical borders and traditional limits of authority and imposed on them new divisions that defined the limits of colonial jurisdiction, which remained separate from the borders of the Princely States[16]. As a result of these newly imposed delineations of authority, these *chhitmohols*, now came to be situated between the newly established borders of the Rangpur district in the Bengal Province, which was

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[15] During the late medieval period, between fifteenth and sixteenth century, the South Asian subcontinent comprised of different kingdoms and principalities, which were stretched out over sometimes vast swathes of territory, not always in a contiguous fashion (Kaviraj, 2005). In the contemporary context of rational geographical spaces, primarily dominated by the concept of neatly defined territorial categories of states, this becomes somewhat difficult to envisage. In some instances, they were separated by large tracts of land, which served as barriers against infiltration (Chakravarty, 1971), whereas in some cases topographical features of the area these kingdoms laid claims over separated one unit from the other. Sometimes boundaries and the geographical extent of territorial units were determined by the ethnic or religious identity of the communities occupying those spaces. The separation of these spaces on the basis of the collective identity of its dwellers served as boundaries against encroachments, due to the significance accorded to maintaining the cultural and religious cohesion of these spaces (Ludden, 2003). Mobility across these spaces was never restricted, although later this came to be identified as one of the primary markers of the modern nation state (Murayama, 2006).

[16] Princely States were the vassalages of local, traditional power that existed initially under the British East India Company and later, the British Crown following the Sepoy Uprising of 1857.

under direct colonial administration; and the then Princely State of Koch Behar (van Schendel, 2002; Cons, 2012). There existed close to 200 of these enclaves or *chhitmohols* within these regions. Upon Partition in 1947[17] Rangpur's decision to join East Pakistan and the accession of Cooch Behar to India two years later in 1949, these spaces were transformed into state enclaves, in that they were now completely enclosed by the territory of another sovereign state.

These spaces, according to Jason Cons can be viewed as the legacy of an incomplete and on-going Partition (Cons, 2012) and complicate steady equivalences of nation, identity, and territory. The partition of 1947 although not the last in the region's history, is simply referred to as 'The Partition' given its resonating impact on postcolonial historiography, contemporary domestic socio-cultural politics, and relations amongst the independent nation states of the region. Its significance to understanding sub-continental history and contemporary politics overshadows the impacts of the partition of 1971, which resulted in the emergence of the independent state of Bangladesh. The dominance of Indian historiographies on regional construals tends to highlight narratives of mediation in liberating a nascent Bangladeshi state from an oppressive and geographically detached domination. Such readings of regional history have obscured the impacts of such critical occasions on lesser visible spaces and also their experiences and perceptions surrounding the two partitions.

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[17] In 1947, having gained independence from British colonial rule, the subcontinent found itself in a precarious position, apropos the overall geographical absurdity and administrative implications of the ensuing arrangement of Partition that emerged as an inevitable conclusion of the political discourse of Hindu-Muslim incompatibility. The Partition was envisioned in a manner whereby Pakistan would be divided into two fragments, separated by a larger expanse of territory that constituted the sovereign territory of India, culminating in what could be best described as an atypical and peculiar territorial arrangement.

Following the Liberation War of 1971[18], one can witness the transference of claims over enclaves to their respective postcolonial states. The historical narratives around the enclaves came to be structured in accordance with the context of claims made over them by the states[19] in which they were situated, without adequate relevance ascribed to the experiences of its inhabitants in traversing extant local complexities, maintaining long-standing cross-border mobilities and navigating a national socio-political landscape marred by the incongruities of religious identities cemented in the regional psyche by its two partitions. Adhering to such continuities in perceptions, enclaves have been treated by modern, postcolonial political history, as extensions of the national spaces of the countries that exercised claims over them, assuming that the sense of association and

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[18] The West Pakistan government followed a stringent policy of arbitrary regulation towards the Eastern side in an effort to curb the rising tide of Bengali nationalism that clamoured for liberation. With an increase in the frequency and intensity of protests against symbols of West Pakistani authority, perpetrated by a varied cross section of the Bengali population, largely consisting of the youth, the repression also intensified to the point where normal conditions were gradually suspended and all forms of expression were violently repressed. War finally broke out on December 3, 1971. The preceding months witnessed recurrent guerrilla operations which were carried out by the Bengali militia, called the *Mukti Bahini*. They received clandestine support from India in the form of providing arms as well as bases of operations within its borders.

Cold War dynamics had rendered the entire situation rather complex, with the United States asserting their support for Pakistan, from the very beginning. Finding itself in the tangle of Cold War power politics, India reached out to the Soviet Union for support, a move for which it was heavily criticised given its staunch support for non-alignment, a concept whose design the country was credited with.

With the buffer of superpower protection secured, the conflict was escalated to all-out war, to engage both fronts of Pakistani territory in an effort to stretch out their resources to the point of collapse. The war lasted for a fortnight. India's military predominance, compounded by the unpredictability of the *Mukti Bahini*'s guerrilla tactics, ensured a swift victory on both fronts. The United States was compelled to rescind its support to Pakistan due to international pressure, and despite efforts by the United States to move resources by manipulating diplomatic loopholes and through informal and illegal channels, the Pakistani army could not sustain its war effort for long. The combined onslaught of the *Mukti Bahini* and the Indian army overwhelmed even the strongest resistive forces that had been braced by the Pakistani army, finally leading to their surrender, and with it the liberation of Bangladesh on December 16, 1971.

[19] This category encompasses only the modern, independent states of India and Bangladesh, when claims over territorially dissociated spaces such as enclaves emerged as a critical concern in ironing out the inconsistencies of their shared international border.

belonging exercised by such assertions were uniformly mirrored by the entire population of its local inhabitants. Similarly, their treatment in International Relations discourses have also been analogous in representing these local populations as passive and unvarying in their acceptance of resolutions arrived at between India and Bangladesh at a bilateral level.

Integration of Enclaves: Attempts under the Colonial State

Prior to their categorisation as enclaves, these spaces existed as *chhitmohols* within the larger Koch princely state. The overlying manner in which these spaces cut across colonial administrative divisions rendered their governance difficult (Miligan, 1919). The recognition of jurisdictional responsibilities was further complicated by the ambiguous divisions of colonial authority and that of the Princely State of Cooch Behar. To bypass such uncertainties, local spatial imaginations demarcated enclaves based on localised articulations of its limits. These perceptions of limitations and permissibility of interactions and mobilities were passed down through lore to acquaint the newer generations to their immediate and relative settings within local and provincial rubrics. Attempts on part of the colonial government towards integrating these spaces into the provincial territory were contested by the Cooch Behar kingdom since it would result in a loss of territory and subsequently, a decline in the revenue generated by its resident communities. A uniform policy of taxation was sought to be implemented by the colonial government towards bringing the enclaves under a common administrative schematic but proved to be difficult for similar reasons of jurisdictional overlap. Attempts to establish common rules of governance and administration at the regional level by the colonial state were complicated by having to account for these undefined territorial existences, which

continued to be formally recognised as a part of the Cooch Behar State. Illicit trade in these areas became a recurrent issue of concern for the colonial administration. The proliferation of licensed government shops selling dutiable goods around the borders of the Cooch Behar State and its enclaves provided a fillip to the smuggling of excisable items into these spaces (Whyte, 2002).[20] To counter this, the colonial administration attempted to impose stricter rules of purchase, whereby inhabitants of the enclaves were not permitted to purchase goods from shops in British territory, and were instead compelled to procure their supplies from within the territory of the Princely State to ensure stricter divisions in revenue collection and taxation.

In these enclaves, the land revenue rates were not subject to any standardised rate of approximation, periodical assessment, nor regular collection. Instead, the determination of the amount of revenue, along with the time of collection was contingent on either the needs of the kingdom or that of the landlords or *jomidars* that oversaw administering the land leased out to them by the Koch kingdom. Classification of land holdings based on their size, derived from information gathered from colonial surveys, enabled the prevalent administration to establish more methodical procedures of determining revenue rates and regularised collection strategies. These efforts were prone to errors due to discrepancies between the information gathered from surveys and the realities on the ground. These circumstances were ever-changing due to the shifting boundaries of agricultural lands and settlements often brought forth by displacements caused by

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[20] This trend continues to this day, and can be evidenced by the proliferation of goods from across the border being sold and purchased by local shops. Prior to the 2015 integration of enclaves, residents of these stateless spaces used Indian markets to sell their agricultural produce and to purchase rations and items of daily use. Today, local residents with familial ties across the border, use such channels to send and receive goods (mostly, processed edibles), which are then sold in local markets.

changing courses of the numerous rivers and tributaries that inundated the area during the monsoons, as well as changing patterns of resettlement. The legal administrative capacities of the colonial administration were therefore mostly confined up till the borders of these enclaves, only to ensure the prevention of unlawful contraventions and to maintain a firm division of legal-administrative responsibilities between the territories managed by the colonial administration and the Princely State of Cooch Behar.

In certain ways, the same trend continued in the administration of these territories after independence as well, and in the efforts of the state to integrate these spaces into its territory. The lack of any standardised, regulated manner of administration proved to be the biggest impediment towards a more comprehensive form of integration that addressed the concerns that were exclusive to life within the enclaves. Subsequent to the Partition, these boundaries and the limits to mobilities in and out of enclaves became more stringent. Before the accession of Cooch Behar into India, an agreement signed between the Princely State and the East Bengal government allowed for the entry of armed sentry in and out of their respective enclaves for concerns that bordered on strategic interests and concerns of security. Similarly, the agreement allowed for district officials to visit these enclaves with prior intimation delivered fifteen days in advance, following which an identity card was issued by the host country, along with official escorts. This also allowed for the bi-annual collection of revenue from these spaces by their respective administrations. These agreements did not, however, assuage the problems of the enclave inhabitants, as they did not contain any clause for allowing the residents of these spaces entry in and out of their enclaved existence. India and Pakistan agreed upon the

institution of a passport system for the enclave residents under an agreement in 1952[21]. The absence of any institutional mechanisms for securing the required documents left the enclave residents with little choice but to cross over borders to gain access to the necessary institutions in their country of association for securing these papers. Therefore, the only way the enclave residents could secure 'lawful' means of access in and out of these enclaves and into their country of association was through illegal networks which facilitated these crossings.

Subsequent to the Partition, these boundaries and the limits to mobilities in and out of enclaves became more stringent, thereby making older mobilities and interdependencies harder to retain. What was discarded by the colonial government due to the ambiguous division of authority it elicited between Princely States and colonial provinces, and the associated complications of extending governance in these spaces, was inherited by the Indian state upon the accession of Cooch Behar into its Union in 1949. Before this, these local *chhitmohols* associated with the Princely State both historically, accepted the suzerainty of its ruler and considered their territories as its extensions. However, their reclassified existence as enclaves by the colonial government, later adopted by the Indian state, has impacted upon their older mobilities and identifications with their immediate

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[21] The first stages of the new states' integrative project came in the form of an agreement signed between India and Pakistan establishing a passport system in 1952 for the enclave residents. This was to allow them access to the state which they had been enclaved by to secure basic means of subsistence. However, anxieties between the two newly independent states complicated such affairs, further convoluted by the impacts of the Partition. The absence of proper institutional mechanisms and historical, cultural, and territorial misgivings amongst the two states acted as impediments against the effective implementation of this proposed system of legitimised access and mobilities. As a result, enclave residents were left with little choice but to cross over their borders illegally to gain access to the necessary institutions in their country of association for securing these documents to secure legitimised accesses.

locale, often commensurate with older associations with the Koch kingdom and the *Rajbongshi* identity[22].

Bilateral Attempts towards Settlement of the Enclave Dispute: 1958-2015

One of the first bilateral efforts towards addressing the enclave issue came under the Nehru-Noon Agreement[23] of 1958 which sought a resolution to issues related to Berubari and the Cooch Behar enclaves (Ahmed et al., 1973). The Agreement, together with seeking a practicable solution for the exchange of enclaves, also appealed for a division of Berubari Union No. 12[24] into two halves. The split of Berubari *thana*[25] was to be based on considerations of religious majorities prevalent in the two divisions. Therefore, the bilateral decision was endorsed by the two states as being largely accepted by the resident populations of the two planned divisions given that it would ensure an alignment of their religious identities with that of the putative religious, majoritarian identities of India and Pakistan. The fallacy of this rationale forwarded by the states were

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[22] A term used to refer to the native Koch people in the latter half of the 1800s – an outcome of their contact with caste Hindus, and their efforts to assert their direct linkage with the *raja'r bongsho* (royal lineage), carried out under their *Kshatriyaisation* led by Panchanan Barma in Bengal. These differences are also asserted in their use of the Kamtapuri, or Rajbongshi language, which derives its vocabulary from Bengali and Assamese and to a lesser extent from Nepali and Maithili. Former enclave residents would often invoke this identity to state their position of dignity under the erstwhile Princely State, later revoked through the imposition of statelessness upon its accession to the Indian Union.

[23] The bilateral agreement signed between the then Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru and Feroze Khan Noon, to resolve all outstanding issues arising out of their shared border and the state enclaves present in their respective national spaces.

[24] Berubari was claimed by the Pakistani Government based on certain erroneous depictions in the original report of the Radcliffe Commission which had not accounted for a certain Thana Boda in its proceedings on determining an equitable division of territory between the two states. This omission allowed the Pakistani government to question the soundness of the entire effort, and enabled them to mobilise claims on additional territories which they believed belonged to them based on considerations of the religious composition of its residing inhabitants (MEA, 2011)

[25] A *Thana* is a unit of Local Administration in India.

contended on the basis of India's constitutionally proclaimed secular identity and West Pakistan's persecution of its citizens in its Eastern wing on the basis of their linguistic identities and associations, despite sharing a common Muslim identity.

The Agreement faced resistance from not only the political Opposition in the capital and the West Bengal State government in which Berubari was located, but also from the masses and residents of the *thana*. With deliberations having been stalled by these protests, the President of India, the Head of the Indian State, referred the issue to the Supreme Court of India, whose judgement stated that the way the transfer was intended went against the country's constitutional ethos, since it involved the actual transfer of territory and was not just a matter of interpreting the Radcliffe Commission[26] decree on the border. In response, the Nehru government introduced an amendment of Article 1 of the Indian Constitution, whereby the transfer could be facilitated without the affected provinces' consent. The Bill for Amendment faced substantial opposition in the Central legislature, but the Congress Party's numerical preponderance in Parliament enabled it to pass the bill with a majority. Local and provincial resistance to its implementation continued, despite state assurances of rehabilitation for the displaced and compensation for the loss of cultivable land. The representation of the bilateral agreement in popular discourse points towards the hegemony of abstractions of national power and interests over local considerations, in its ability to supersede such reflections in asserting itself

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[26] The border between India and Bangladesh was established by the Boundary Commission chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe. In 1971, the eponymous boundary line came to be accepted as the official border between India and the newly independent country of Bangladesh. The India-Bangladesh border has since then been a major source of conflict because of three notable remitting issues, the un-demarcated sector of approximately 6.1 km in three sectors viz. Daikhata-56 (West Bengal), Muhuri River-Belonia (Tripura) and Lathitila-Dumabari (Assam); exchange of enclaves; and adverse possessions.

against provincial resistances. Continuing legal challenges surrounding the implementation of the agreement, compounded by local protests and the negative public opinion the issue of ceding territory to Pakistan had accrued in the public sphere, deferred the ratification and subsequent implementation of the policies of the Nehru-Noon Agreement (Chatterjee, 2011; Chatterji, 1999; Banerjee, 2001).

After the Liberation War of 1971, and the emergence of the independent state of Bangladesh, both the governments came together to sign the Land Boundary Accord of 1974, popularly recalled as the Indira-Mujib Agreement, after the two heads of state officiating the bilateral pact. The Agreement sought to address the issues of the transfer of enclaves and adverse possessions[27] as well as arriving at a settlement regarding the un-demarcated sectors of the India-Bangladesh border. The Agreement also addressed the outstanding Berubari issue, whereby India sought rights over the southern half of the *thana* and its adjacent enclaves in exchange for the transfer of the DA composite enclave to Bangladesh. A stretch of land was to be leased out to Bangladesh by the Indian government, which would connect the contiguous enclaves of DA to Panbari Mouza on the Bangladeshi side of the border (MEA, 2011). However, the arrangements of its implementation would lead to the sequestration of the Kuchlibari area on the Indian side, which could now only be accessed through the Tin Bigha Corridor (TBC); which was initially leased out to Bangladesh against a token amount of 1 Bangladeshi Taka, which has since been waived off. Kuchlibari residents and others that owned land in the area

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[27] Adverse possessions refer to land that was occupied by the citizens of another country, who by virtue of their prolonged ties claim legal title to the same. These tracts were mostly situated along riverine routes, and are referred to as *chars*. In most cases the changing course of the rivers saw these *chars* shift to the other side of the border, due to their constantly changing contours.

protested against the acquisition of land by the Indian state to build the corridor, fomented local consternations surrounding the loss of land to a neighbouring country. However, such mobilisations remained mostly localised and were subsequently upturned by the cumulative strength of the Congress in the Indian Parliament. A politically compliant Communist Party of India (Marxist) as the ruling party in the state government of West Bengal further expedited the completion of the transfer to Bangladesh.

Bilateral deliberations on the exchange of the remaining enclaves however remained in a state of political limbo, until again in 2011 when the Manmohan Singh led UPA (United Progressive Alliance) coalition government signed the 2011 Protocol to the 1974 LBA, with Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The move had the support of the Congress and the Left. Opposition came from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC), but remained mostly confined at the level of the states. Their opposition to the Bill was on grounds that it sought to alter the territory of the country, and thereby stood in violation of the basic structure of the Constitution. Since territory was linked to the functioning of state sovereignty, which constitutes one of the basic principles of the Indian Constitution, this provision could not be altered through a parliamentary amendment. Despite popular and political opposition, the 119th Constitutional Amendment Bill managed to be introduced in the Upper House of the Indian Parliament, the Rajya Sabha in 2013 but failed to get passed by a majority on to the next house, for the next stage of deliberations.

With a change at the Centre, and the BJP coming to power in 2014 with a majority, political allegiances and stances on the issue experienced a complete shift. The 119th

Constitutional Amendment Bill was reintroduced in the Parliament, and this time was passed by both Houses in 2015 because of the presence of an absolute majority in the Parliament. The Bill successfully amended the First Schedule of the Constitution, in relation to the reconfiguration of territorial boundaries in the states of West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram, and thereby gave effect to the Protocols of the LBA of 1974. This resulted in the operationalisation of the LBA and paved the way for the demarcation of a length of boundary of approximately 6.1 km in three sectors viz. Daikhata-56 (West Bengal), Muhuri River-Belonia (Tripura) and Lathitila-Dumabari (Assam); the exchange of enclaves and adverse possessions in 2015 (MEA, 2011).

Enclaves as Sites of Regional Bilateralism

In the larger context of India-Pakistan relations leading up to the liberation of Bangladesh, claims over territories, were often guided by intentions to secure reserves of natural resources, areas of strategic importance, or even asserting the right to rule over certain populations upon which notions of trans-territorial affiliations were extended. In an effort to legitimise such assertions, states often validated the same through the propagation of constructed extrapolatory claims which historically linked these spaces or populations to the claimant state (Jazeel, 2012). The legitimacy of these assertions was usually based upon the denigration of similar demands forwarded by other claimants, by situating the veracity of the same on expedient, nationalist constructions of history. The usage of historical and cultural references in particularistic nationalist rhetoric naturalised the extension of such claims over territories or populations by invoking a presumed provenance (Hopkins & Dixon, 2006). In this way, in postcolonial South Asia, the past

became one of the major instruments through which newly independent regional states exercised claims to secure their own specific visions of the future and constituted spatialised imaginations of their own statehood.

Assertions over enclaves founded on claims of historicity, however, were markedly absent from bilateral deliberations between India and West Pakistan prior to 1971, owing to the existence of other territorial conflicts between the two countries. Despite their isolation from national discourses during this period, the idea of belonging to a particular state was frequently articulated in these enclaves, and such expressions were typically aligned with more affective discourses of religious identity which became the acknowledged meter of localised identification at the borderlands in the wake of the 1947 Partition. These mottled and incompatible local historiographies and identifications often fomented conflict amongst different groups inhabiting these locales. In such a situation, the enclave emerged as a site of local contestation, where actors from the two neighbouring states fought for rights to assert their possession over these unclaimed, stateless lands and its resident communities. As a result, instances of rioting and violence became quite prevalent in certain enclaves in the years leading up to the 1971 Liberation War (Cons, 2012).

Although the enclave dispute never featured majorly in the bilateral narratives underlying India and Pakistan relations prior to 1971, the reality at the local level belied this lack of engagement. The affective socio-cultural miens of the 1947 Partition contributed significantly to the extension of impetuses for violence at the local level in perpetrating transgressions against the *other*. The populations residing in these spaces mirrored the

larger motivations of religious and linguistic nationalisms, which were echoed in both popular and political domains through the course of their conflict, leading up to the Liberation of Bangladesh. Consequently, the socio-cultural machinations of both past and contemporary conflicts between India and Pakistan were correspondingly recreated and played out at the local levels in these enclaves and their adjacent borderland locales. This resulted in a surge in violence at the local level, mostly motivated by historicised notions of difference and irreconcilability between Muslim and Hindu identities, prompted by a difficult, postcolonial regional historiography[28].

These narratives were embedded in particularistic and passionate local discourses revolving around nationalistic and communalised understandings of belonging and conversely, of otherness. The linear depiction of events and the neat delineation of protagonist-antagonist relationships within such 'national' narratives surrounding the India Pakistan territorial conflicts after 1947 came to define the dominant orientations of their populations, more prominently at the peripheries where such conflicts materialised, between local groups and the two states. This facilitated the spread of an undeviating identification of the adversary both at the level of the states and at the local level. The bilateral conflict accorded legitimacy to local disputes in perpetrating violence against those who fit the category of their state's enemy. The discursivity underlying their bilateral relations perpetuated by the narratives of its representation at various stages of its evolution came to influence the materiality of subjacent conflicts at the local levels. Even though the enclaves emerged as sites and foci of local conflict during this period,

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[28] The perpetuity of such notions during this period assumed widespread diffusion in the public sphere owing to the mobilisation of such narratives by the national level by the Indian and Pakistani governments to affirm the hostilities underlying their bilateral relationship since the Partition of 1947.

these spaces remain absent from the discourses of borderland and its associated conflicts that shaped the space and its extant frameworks of interactions and belonging.

After the Liberation War of 1971, bilateral engagements pertaining to the management of the India-Bangladesh boundary presented the necessity to integrate the residents of the enclaves as a secondary concern[29] to issues surrounding the un-demarcated sections of the border. This indicates a prioritisation of concerns surrounding a partial border and the settlement of all outstanding border issues over the integration of the enclaves and its populations. Speculatively, this could be viewed to be an outcome of the *de facto* nature of claims that prompted a prioritisation of more pressing territorial anxieties; in part aided by the mutual recognition of the implausibility of allowing the extension of governance beyond borders into sovereign territory where these enclaves were embedded. Therefore these territories were already viewed as a part of the national territory notwithstanding their official statelessness. However, to be able to exercise its power over these stateless spaces and populations, a bilateral agreement became imperative, given the nature of territorial claims that it sought to address. This alludes to the absence of local considerations, and the lack of state initiative to extend welfare and securities to populations that were internally displaced, by its own machinations of territorial sovereignty. Although situated within their own national territory, and with its populations integrated at the local levels, the states were unable to bypass the rubrics of regional construals of sovereignty, which would delimit any form of intervention to be in breach of its inviolability. This is representative of the tendency of states to respond to

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[29] The issue is featured in Article 2, Clause II of the Land Boundary Agreement (1974), which was ratified in 2011, and later implemented in 2015. Whereas Clause I, deals with the major areas of contention and dispute in their common border (GOI: MEA, 2011).

primacy of their specific national interest concerns in their interactions with other similar units, rather than on engaging with the local as a necessary point of intervention. The efficacy of such processes can be questioned when viewed against the persistence of complications in these erstwhile enclave spaces. This leads one to inquire into the positionality of local narratives in bilateral deliberations leading up to the implementation of the LBA in 2015. The reason behind the same may be situated in the process of national interest articulation itself, which seldom represents or includes the local narratives underlying an overarching issue (Autesserre, 2006).

Local Impacts of Bilateralism in the Enclave Borderland

The unclassified territorial existence of the enclaves which featured as a prominent issue in India-Bangladesh bilateral relations was made the focus of its resolution process. The primacy that such a 'national' interpretation of a 'local' issue attributed to the provision of citizenship and the exchange of territories glossed over other contestations existing within these spaces. Post-integration, the languid rehabilitative and assimilative measures of the Indian state towards the enclaves and their inhabitants indicates its failure to portend the institutional challenges and local obstacles that would impede in bridging the existent institutional and economic gaps between these newly integrated spaces and its surrounding locales. The scarce interchanges between these discourses of the 'local' and 'national' was evinced in the absence of localised issues of identity; territorial and notional association with the locale, and the economic and socio-political struggles of the enclave residents from the operational dictates of the LBA.

At the bilateral level, the states' essentialised perusal of the enclave conflict took precedence over its local construal. These understandings appeared to be detached from the realities of the situation the state sought to address (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004); which can be viewed as a propensity of statist apperceptions of issues to dissociate perceptive engagement from the nuances of their localised operations (Schmidt 1990; Mason & Rychard 2005). The absence of measures to address local conflicts beyond issues of citizenship and transfer of territory is indicative of the discordance between national and local interpretations of the same conflict, and the lack of dialectical engagement between the two paradigms. The assessment of the issue from a national interest perspective overlooked the need to address vulnerabilities that were a direct outcome of the enclaves' isolation. Devising solutions to these issues based upon national interests de-necessitated the need for addressing concerns emerging out of its localised manifestations (Thomassen, 2012). As a result, associated local conflicts which emerged in these enclave locales and their adaptations towards navigating the extant complications of their stateless existence at the state's peripheries were primarily addressed through an overarching state-centric framework.

The exclusion of 'local' narratives from discussions on localised issues considered relevant in national or bilateral contexts, leads one to question the viability of the approach itself. In this case, an essentially localised issue continues to exist through its associated conflicts, beyond the point of its bilateral resolution. Engaging with issues from a national interest focused perspective obscured the presence of other matters which may not constitute an immediate interest in the bilateral context, but its exclusion nonetheless obfuscates analysis and subsequently fetters probable programs of its

resolution. Not accounting for the 'local' in the construction and articulation of the enclave issue produced an incomplete understanding upon which bilateral intervention came to be predicated. In the wake of the enclaves' exchange, the issues which persisted were consigned to the sphere of domestic politics. State efforts towards addressing these issues in a retroactive manner point towards their exclusion from the bilateral process which only sought to expedite the exchange of territories and populations. In that case the LBA's success was only in terms of its stated objectives relating to individual national interests, not contributing to the complete resolution of the enclave issue and its associated conflicts, although such concerns featured prominently as political capital and issues prompting mobilisations at the local level.

It is important to recognise that the resolution of the enclave issue necessitated bilateral intervention as it involved the transfer of territories and populations situated within the national territories of two states separated by an international border. However, the way the exchange of territories and populations was carried out suggests that its progressions did not account for the implications it might effect at the local level, where such directives were to be translated into action. At the same time, the resolution policy, which sought to integrate these previously stateless peoples and the spaces they inhabited within the larger national space only resulted in a change in status of these spaces and people from a *de facto* recognition to a *de jure* reality. The persistence of contestations at the local level following the exchange also prompts a critical inquiry regarding the efficacy of the states' ascription of the moral and constitutional attributes of citizenship and its identification of what constitutes national territory as a viable solution, and how such processes offset local frameworks of support.

Regarding its conceptualisation and translation into action, cooperative state action has been perceived as a means to further the individual national interests of the participatory states. The selection of potential areas of cooperation are carried out based on identifying which issues may be conducive or inimical to the realisation of their national interests and objectives, and to address them accordingly. The same holds true in a bilateral context, as states often engage with issues as a precondition for furthering their individual interests, even if the same issues are localised in terms of their scope of operation and implications. Therefore, local issues are often overlooked unless they are considered to be contributing to the national interest of the state, and even then it is only the local spatiality that is made the subject of intercession, rather than shifting emphasis to its people and their experiences as the primary focus of analyses and discernment. Similar impacts are observable when one critically engages with facets of India-Bangladesh bilateralism on the issue of border enclaves. Although the LBA has been endorsed as a success by both countries, the same has been confined to the issues it prioritised and subsequently addressed. Apart from the formal recognition of the enclave residents as citizens and their land as a part of the state, local conflicts stemming from the challenges associated with their erstwhile 'statelessness' and its impacts upon its residents' perceptions of their own identities vis-à-vis the local levels and the state, and associated vulnerabilities of their erstwhile statelessness, persists at the local levels in these borderlands even today.

Enclaves in National and Bilateral Narratives

In the context of the LBA's operationalisation in 2015, the relegation of issues surrounding the status of the enclaves as a subsidiary to larger interests of border security and regulation, as articulated in bilateral policies, resulted in the absence of questions of identity, association (both territorial and notional), as well as its associated issues surrounding the economic, social, and political struggles of the enclave inhabitants from bilateral policy concerns. Responding to these concerns in a retroactive manner indicates the absence of any engagement with local narratives surrounding the enclave issue in the initial stages of policy formulation. As a result of which official steps towards resolution only went so far as addressing only the most apparent causes contributing to the persistence of such issues. This is so because, policies which dictate relations amongst two nations often tend to be based upon narrowly defined national interests where local narratives, demands and dynamics find close to no representation or engagement. The resolution process in this particular case, remained confined to the transfer of territories, whereas the more complex issues that would underlie this experiential shift in the lived experiences of its inhabitants from being stateless inhabitants to citizens, was absent from analyses of probable impacts that it would come to bear at the immediate local levels. In the case of disputes concerning the India-Bangladesh border, the non-inclusion of local narratives in the policy formulation stages have made for un-sagacious approaches towards resolution based upon centrally determined interests and considerations. Such policies have failed to address the deeper, underlying causes behind the persistence of complications in these spaces even after the formal execution of the LBA. Additionally, the persistence of impediments in the post-settlement integration of the enclaves also

brings under scrutiny the effectiveness of conceptualisations of 'resolution' that are dissociated from ground level realities. As clarified in the preceding section, the settlement of issues surrounding the un-demarcated sections of the border, assumed primacy over the matter of integrating the enclaves and its inhabitants into their respective national spaces and immediate locales, since the resolution of their unsettled existence would expedite the establishment and maintenance of a secure and impermeable border which featured quite high up on a bilateral list of priorities.

The issue of integration of the enclaves was further accentuated by a host of other concerns, thereby rendering the entire situation much more complex than involving just the recognition of a *de facto* claim by the two states. The deep federalisation of the Indian polity significantly impacted upon the bilateral resolution process. For the provincial governments whose territories stood to be altered by the transfer, their resistance was used as bartering chips, periodically relented to derive leeway from the Central government in other regards and intensified to stall or delay the process. These dynamics between the Centre and the States frequently played out as dubious exercising of leverage and politicking, which could not be disregarded given the necessity to secure those particular states' compliance in their bilateral efforts to resolve all outstanding issues towards the establishment of a stable and conflict-free border with Bangladesh.

The states that stood to be directly affected by this transfer of territories; particularly West Bengal and Assam, played a key role in stalling efforts towards the integration of these spaces from well before 2015. The grievances raised by these state's governments were primarily concerning the ceding of territory or having to share resources

(particularly, river waters), which they claimed were being unilaterally decided upon by the Union government. Despite such opposition, the agreement was finally implemented in 2015 prompted by a proactive shift in India's neighbourhood policy. The final ratification of the LBA was expedited by the national interest to extend economic connections to other regional actors through its North-eastern corridor, for which a complaisant Bangladesh became a necessity. Consequently, the BJP's perceptions of the LBA also underwent a glaring shift from the time of its political existence as a minority party in the Opposition to its assumption of government through an outright majority. This shift in their position can be traced from initially standing against non-reciprocal territorial concessions to Bangladesh through joint agitations with regional parties such as the AGP against the UPA's decision to ratify the bilateral agreement; to one based on compromise and adjustment, to integrate India regionally with its South Asian and Southeast Asian neighbours.

Thus, the settlement process came to represent an exercise in addressing only those issues which the state considered as vital in ensuring the realisation of its national interests. As an outcome, the enclave issue was reduced merely to addressing the formalities underlying its integration. The absence of policy reflexions on other associated concerns such as the challenges to the assimilation of these spaces and its inhabitants into the mainstream national space, or the need to ensure the provision of a framework of support and basic securities with regard to the provision of housing, food, education and employment to facilitate their smooth transition into the role of citizens can be used to evidence these claims of the study. Resolution practicalised as such, established only a transitory stability, whereby the most evident causal factors were addressed. This

provisional constancy is often mistakenly interpreted as the aggregated consequences of the resolution process. Therefore, key issues surrounding these individuals' struggles, regarding their integration into a national space and their gradual acclimation into the role of a citizen continues to persist at the local level in various forms and intensities. These concerns along with questions of identification, formally, in terms of the states' recognition of these individuals as citizens; and informally, in terms of their (those who chose to relocate) associations across the border, whether familial, occupational or existent at an affective level have contributed significantly to the persistence of feelings of incongruity amongst these local populaces. As a result, despite their official recognition as being part of their respective national spaces, their sense of isolation and separation persists to this day.

Multiple Local Framings of Enclave Identity

The crests and troughs of the bilateral relation between India and Bangladesh determined the expediency of resolution of all outstanding issues related to their border, including the exchange of enclaves. This created major concerns regarding ensuring the provision of basic rights and safeguards for close to 51,000 people who were living in these stateless, ungoverned spaces on either side of the India-Bangladesh border. The political tussle between the Centre and the State (read in India) has transformed these erstwhile enclave spaces into sites of contestation for power. The way the inhabitants of these erstwhile stateless spaces have been integrated into a national space necessitates critical engagement in order to understand the differences in perceptions regarding the issue at the local and national levels. Thereby, revealing the gaps that emerge between the

ground realities and the indicated effects of their bilateral policies surrounding the enclaves' integration. For the most part, the populations residing in these spaces have been forced to 'begin again', because of which they find themselves in a disadvantaged position in relation to the older citizens of their locales. Related issues of displacement, rehabilitation, validity of rights of property ownership across the border, provision of basic rights and political representation of these people are some of the chief concerns that have arisen at these locales in the wake of the LBA's operationalisation.

For the inhabitants who chose to stay back[30], the issue of identity necessitates an inquiry to understand their position at their immediate local levels. Identities of the 'other' in local framings have come to be aligned along communal and nationalistic binaries of 'us' and 'them'; the boundaries of which are further bolstered by the notions of belongingness which are rooted deep in experiences and familiarities drawn from their local territorial relations and memories (Lorber, 1999). Alongside territoriality, belongingness as an analytic of how history is remembered and articulated has also been employed as the basis to make claims on territory, rights, and membership in these spaces (Cons, 2012). In this case, even if populations from these erstwhile enclave spaces or the relocated populations share similar, if not the same, socio-cultural traits with other local resident

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[30] The LBA provided enclave residents the option to relocate to the other country based on their bilateral agreement. These families were housed in temporary settlement camps till measures for their relocation and rehabilitation were configured by the state. These populations find themselves pulled between an association with the state in which they left behind, to which their histories and mores are tied and their state of relocation where they are without such roots or affinities (Jones, 2009; Cons, 2013; Shewly, 2013). Similarly, they also frequently encounter difficulties that arise from the associative identities of the 'other' in local framings of otherisation. As a result, they are often labelled as 'illegal immigrants' and 'encroachers' (Gillan, 2002) despite the consent of the states to allow for their transfer.

inhabitants, their dislocation from the state's historiography relegates them to the status of the 'other' in the larger national discourses on belonging and identity (Mingus, 2004).

In the South Asian context, processes of defining and understanding the machinations of identity formation are further complicated by more dominant pulls of reconciling national and sub-national identities; the latter being based upon associations with a particular religion, language, ethnicity, or a sense of regionalism (van Schendel, 2002). Movement amongst these varying categories of identity is guided by the situational contexts and circumstances which individuals or communities encounter in their quotidian interactions with the state and other local actors. Individuals navigate in between these identities, associating with those classifications which would secure them the greatest advantages in a specific setting (Lorber, 1999). In most instances, such decisions and choices are motivated by an array of considerations; ranging from the anxiety of dissociation from their primary groups of association, to establishing definite and limited context of interactions for specific gains or benefits, to simply navigating the various complexities underlying borderland realities (Banerjee et al., 1999; Banerjee, 2002; Parker, 2006).

The interactions of the inhabitants of the erstwhile enclaves and other local actors are similarly textured by the three disparate identity sets that they engage with in eliciting specific, incidental advantages. Firstly, enclave residents associate or are locally associated with the state territories in which they are geographically situated through which they are viewed as state citizens; and secondly, with the state with which they associate notionally and historically, as residents of its enclaves; and finally, as stateless enclave residents, devoid of any affiliations to the state or their immediate locale. These

three identifications have been identified by the study in its operation and mobilisation at the local level in appellations from within the community of enclave residents and non-enclave residents as well[31]. The peculiarity of their geographical isolation rendered these populaces 'stateless' for over sixty years, and therefore unable to exact even the most basic of rights and safeguards associated with state citizenship (Jones, 2009; Shewly, 2013), and therefore these identifications remained confined mostly in local interactions with non-enclave locals. In this context, questions of whether these spaces continue to exist as enclaves within their respective state even after their bilateral integration arises; due to the emergence of concerns surrounding the provision of basic rights of citizenship to its inhabitants, and impediments to their mobility within the larger national space in availing prospects for social, economic and political development and progress at the local levels. To answer these questions, there emerges an extant need to understand the limits of statelessness as enumerated by the local experiences of the former enclave and non-enclave residents and how the bilateral integration of these spaces has resulted in a shift in local perceptions surrounding issues of access and mobility in a complex, latticed local landscape.

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[31] Identities of the 'other' at the local level were textured by nationalist leitmotifs of territory, history, and religion (Lorber, 1999). As an outcome of such perceptions, there arose certain favourable configurations of identity which enabled a stateless individual to access greater participatory opportunities at the local level. The religious homogenisation of these spaces brought forth by the forced displacements of the Dahagram-Angarpota conflict, established the foundations of local cooperation amongst enclave and non-enclave residents. These interactions often manifested in the form of shared dependencies between the two groups. For instance, prior to 2015, a large number of enclave residents were able to secure voter identification cards by citing the addresses of family members and local acquaintances who resided outside of their enclave's boundaries. On the other hand, enclave residents were often mobilised by the local populations in protests against the transfer. The involvement of enclave residents in such movements was used as a means to validate local assertions over these spaces through the involvement of those who stood to be directly affected by the exchange. These local mobilisations were largely based on considerations of preservation of national territory, rather than the difficulties faced by these stateless communities, albeit the marginal benefits drawn by them through such associations.

Local Framings of Isolation and Statelessness

Participant narratives represent life in the enclaves, prior to their integration, as constituted of persistent and transitory dependencies, shared amongst the enclave and non-enclave locals[32]. In the absence of state involvement prior to 2015, the enclave residents and non-enclave locals collaborated in assuaging the challenges of their specific circumstantial settings defined by their particular marginalisations. Viewed against such narratives, the bilateral prioritisation of extending governance to these spaces and citizenship to its inhabitants constitutes a partial representation of ground realities in failing to account for the adaptive capacities of the borderland local. In separating the enclaves from its position within the larger local historiography, the state fails to recognise the implications of their presence and their interactions with local processes spanning different realms of their local sociality. Therefore, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of local realities, it is necessary to view the impacts of statelessness as not restricted to the enclaves but extending to comprise the locale in its entirety, which traversed its challenges and adapted to its transformations collectively.

The years before and following the Liberation War of 1971 saw forced displacements brought about by West Pakistan's persecution of Bengali Muslims and Hindus in East Pakistan[33], into the West Bengal borderland (Bose, 2005). The émigrés in these

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[32] The study employs this category to refer to local inhabitants who were not enclave residents.

[33] Pakistan's two sectors were predominantly Muslim, in demographic terms. Its Western wing was dominated by an Urdu speaking Muslim population comprising of Punjabi, Pashtun and Sindhi peoples, along with more minor ethnic collectives of Saraikis, Mujahirs and Balochis. The Eastern wing on the other hand comprised of Bengali speaking Muslims who comprised the majority and an Urdu speaking Bihari population, who by advantage of their linguistic and cultural likenesses with the Western wing occupied a

displacements were mostly enclave residents from across the border. Narratives of dislocation recounted by participants who shifted from enclaves in Bangladesh to India were underwritten by the anxieties of life amongst a numerically preponderant and hostile community. The religious homogenisation of Indian enclave spaces as an outcome of these population shifts, transformed localised perceptions of the issue of their exchange from one of encroachment of national territory by the Muslim or Bangladeshi 'other', to that of denial of state recognition of the new Hindu demography of these spaces, which often providing common ground for deeper ties between the enclave and non-enclave locals.

These displacements, although homogenised the enclave space in terms of religious identity, did not lead to an erasure of local differentiations. The enclave identity, although viewed uniformly at the local level amongst non-enclave residents, conceded an internal set of differentiations which impacted upon the extent of their integration into the local milieu. The different timelines of entry and settlement in the enclaves determined the depth of local acceptance extended towards these populations. Assertions of belonging

more privileged standing in the social order, as well as enjoyed a greater share of opportunities despite being outnumbered by the 'Bengalis'.

The Western sector enjoyed almost total control over the Eastern sector, and administered it more like a colonial protectorate than as a territorial extension of the same nation state. These perceptions of difference which reflected in official state policies originating from the Western sector were based upon a sense of cultural predominance of the martial and valiant Punjabis and Sindhis over the pusillanimous and timid Bengalis. When these differences surfaced in the administrative policies of the Western sector towards its Eastern wing, they manifested in the form of an explicit policy of segregation based upon language. Since religiously the Eastern sector was also predominantly Muslim, language was transformed into the primary issue of contention with the imposition of Urdu by the government as the official language on the Bengali speaking population. Although language served as the primary plane of suppression, with time it evolved into a more wide-ranging proscription that was singularly directed towards thwarting political mobilisation in the Eastern sector and even blocking rightfully elected majorities from assuming power (Alamgir & D'Costa, 2011).

and validity of residency within the enclave space, and claims to resources, mobilities into the local space were locally validated against the year of arrival of populaces belonging to different settlement clusters. Accordingly, the positionality of enclave residents within their immediate social milieu (both within and outside enclaves) varied across different sections of its constituent population. Original inhabitants and those who settled in the enclaves during and immediately after the Partition of 1947 enjoyed a greater level of assimilation into the local milieu. On the other hand, claims forwarded by the newer entrants, especially those who migrated after the independence of Bangladesh (1971) were often overlooked by the original inhabitants and cast under aspersions of illegal immigrants or encroachers[34]. These localised differentiations also led to the emergence of splintered clusters of settlement within enclaves. These clusters broke away from local appellations of the particular enclave and renamed their settlements; thereby fracturing the homogenous identification of a particular enclave space within local spatial perceptions, and in the process transforming the locale's socio-spatial arrangements. As an outcome of this separation, each cluster within a single enclave began to adopt its own forms of local interaction and in doing so, redefined its position within the local milieu over time.

Prior to the enclaves' integration in 2015, claims of validation of identity, assertions over resources and solicitations for social and spatial mobilities were negotiated between the enclave and non-enclave locals informally. The non-enclave locals were the purveyors of the transferred benefits and identifications of their own identity as citizens, enclave

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[34] These aspersions are mostly associated with the Bangladeshi Muslims, due to historical anxieties of the local populations about their role and motivations during the Dahagram-Angarpota conflict that stood in opposition to local claims.

locals. These transferred identities came to be considered as an important index of recognition and qualifier for participation amongst the enclave populaces. Within these enclaved border spaces, access to institutions of governance, healthcare, and education, as well as mobilities across public spaces were considered as valuable privileges in the absence of legitimate channels of support and welfare. The non-enclave locals began to sublet comparable privileges of citizenship to meet the enclave locals' demands for recognition and mobility, in the absence of the state. This allowed the enclave inhabitants to extend their participation in local political affairs, while the non-enclave locals used their prepollency over them to regulate opinions and involvement in critical mobilisations against the bilateral transfer, and other local issues concerning the enclaves. The state's absence enabled the non-enclave locals to reify their position of influence at the local level by maintaining the status quo of an inherent power difference between them and the enclave inhabitants through their extension of a limited citizenship to the enclave residents.

"Before we would go to vote in fear, but now we can go with our heads held high. Previously we had to make sure to cast our vote in any which way possible. That would ensure that we get some benefits from the leaders, no matter how small. And if our name was on the list we could say that we are locals. Having a voter card enabled us to get work outside. The youngsters didn't want to work in the fields. They wanted to go outside." (Field Interview, 27.06.2018)

The interactions that evolved around such networks allowed enclave residents to secure voter identification cards by citing the addresses of family members and acquaintances who resided outside of the enclaves' boundaries. A voter ID card enabled the enclave residents to bypass legal barriers to mobility, as well as local identifications of being

'*asthayi*' (temporary) and *chhit-er lok* (enclave dweller). It was a way for them to assert their *'nagorikota'* (citizenship) during the elections, a symbolic proclamation of their linkage to their immediate local, and the larger state. Having their names on the electoral roll also enabled enclave residents to secure work outside of their enclaves and in other states, along with applying for other state welfares such as ration cards. In return for the same, enclave residents were also frequently mobilised to participate in protests, to authenticate 'local' (read, non-enclave) grievances surrounding the proposed transfer at various stages, often mirroring the political narratives of the regional opposition factions.

The local extension of this 'quasi-citizenship' encouraged enclave locals to extend the scope of their participation in local matters which was considered as supplementary validation to their rights and position within the locale. However, the extension of such recognitions upon the enclave locals was conditional. The non-enclave locals recognised enclave inhabitants as 'citizens', owing to their residence within the larger national space, though within its 'stateless' pockets. In this regard, local acceptance stemmed from viewing the enclave space as a legitimate part of the larger national territory and therefore by extension, the recognition of its occupants as citizens. Despite being embedded within local processes of interactions and participation, a difference in position between the enclave and non-enclave residents was maintained and reified through their identification as *'chhit bashinda'* (enclave resident); despite having circumvented their statelessness to exercise a limited set of rights in association with the non-enclave locals. The presence of these networks transmuted local perceptions of the government or '*shorkar*'. Frequently, enclave and non-enclave locals would attribute the source of their grievances to the vaguely defined local category of the *'shorkar'* in protesting against the transfer of

enclaves and loss of land due to fencing, amongst other local issues. This term was used interchangeably to refer to institutions of both national and state governance. The referent changed with the varying contexts of its usage, however remained confined to an identification that would seldom fruition into practical engagement with its institutions and processes. In contrast, the local, informal networks of support, underlined by a sense of proximity and familiarity with local power elites made them more accessible to the enclave locals, than their formal, state counterparts.

In 2015, the enclaves' integration in national territory eventually removed all legal barriers to mobility which had previously been informally negotiated through local support channels. The state's entry marked a change at the local level, through the displacement of this local hegemony and its insertion as the formal purveyor and validator of all claims to rights, identification, and welfare. Additionally, the state's highlighting of rehabilitation through welfare and assistance was demarcated exclusively for the erstwhile enclave inhabitants. The provision of citizenship, which was meant to equalise relations amongst enclave and non-enclave residents at the local level resulted in a local polarisation between former enclave and non-enclave residents. The non-enclave locals consider themselves equal claimants to the same benefits because of the general conditions of deprivation contained within the larger, peripheral locale. This sense of disparity, created by the formalisation of the enclave residents' identities has given rise to new dissonances at the local level. Arising from a localised sense of discrimination by the state against non-enclave locals, these dissensions are paradoxically the same which the state sought to remedy in the stateless enclaves through integration. The state's control over authentication of citizenship claims further eroded the hegemony of the non-enclave

locals. This displaced local processes of integration and existent relations of dependence amongst the local population. Further, the state's introduction of rehabilitative measures (although limited) for the enclaves led to a reversion of the equitability established at the local level through such interdependencies. This in part, was impelled by the state's approach to bring these spaces at par with its surrounding locale; that can be viewed in the context of a limited rendering of the enclaves' statelessness and failure to account for the emergence of local adaptive capacities in its absence.

The integration of enclave residents within formal categorisations of belonging and frameworks of interaction, instead of withdrawing their stateless identities further consolidated it by highlighting their marginalisation as the determinant for accessing state welfare. This led to the re-emergence of the 'chhit bashinda' identity among enclave residents at the local level, which had previously been circumvented through interfaces with non-enclave residents. The state's identification of enclave residents as beneficiaries to its welfare cemented differentiations within the local milieu based on the enclave identity. As an outcome, the enclave locals find themselves pulled between two contesting identities. Historically, they identify as inhabitants of their immediate locale, constituting the larger local space established through interactions with non-enclave locals. However, after the integration of the enclaves, the chhit bashinda identity centred on statist framings of statelessness gains more currency of usage amongst its resident populations both as a means of self-identification and local appellation. The state's recognition of the stateless enclave resident as the focus of its welfare measures, failed to recognise that the conditions contributing to their marginalisation had been significantly offset through local integrative processes prior to their integration in 2015. In this

context, the distribution of benefits under the state's rehabilitation plans to enclave residents was considered as excess beyond their rightful due, as perceived by the non-enclave locals.

The state's assessment of the issue failed to account for the enclave's embedded existence within a complex locale constituted of mutual interdependencies. As a result, its policies of integration were predicated on the enclaves' perceived absolute statelessness. However, they failed to consider the presence of local networks which fascinatingly mirrored statist proclivities in their distribution of resources and benefits, determined by meeting certain qualificatory requirements determined at the local level. In this context, the non-enclave locals extended a limited citizenship to the enclave inhabitant on the basis of their shared history of interdependencies and mobilities, as well as considerations of socio-cultural congruencies. Thereby, even in the absence of the state, its practices of defining conditionalities of membership and access were being replicated at the local level by the non-enclave locals. The enclaves' statelessness can be therefore understood as through a verbatim understanding of the word itself. In that it denotes it as the absence of only the state's exclusive control in the organisation of territories and communities, but not an absence of the same in the absolute sense of the term.

These adaptations made by the enclave locals can be viewed as outcomes of shared necessity to traverse their unsettled circumstances and identifications, brought to the fore more glaringly by the manner of its bilateral engagement, rather than as a function of its history. As a result of such intercessions, the lives of the local inhabitants, both enclave and non-enclave residents came to be subjected to the transposition of the fictionalised

eternality of orderly spatial imagination, in ironing out the historicity of their interactions and interdependencies. The mobilities and livelihood practices of enclave inhabitants were often dependent on 'informal' and 'illegal' cross-border interactions which came to be viewed in contravention to the regulations of the state and its perceptions of their statelessness and associated limitations and restrictions. At the same time, the liminal nature of these spaces allowed the state to assume a position of heightened control over their administration, often justified by the notional relevance of the borderland in statist security perspectives. It is between the gaps that emerge between these two frameworks, that the local and the state converge in perfect harmony to constitute interactions which furthers their own respective ends without conflict.

Having passed more than six years since their integration, concerns surrounding the provision of necessities such as rations, housing, healthcare, and employment, have arisen at the local level. The shift of dependence of the enclave locals from the non-enclave locals to the state led to a decline in the levels of intra-local dependencies; subsequently isolating the enclaves from their immediate locale. This prompts the question whether integration constituted a feasible solution to the issue since it effectively re-enclaved these spaces only to integrate them through its own formal mechanisms of assimilation. State policies towards the resolution of conflicts are frequently dissociated from local narratives surrounding a particular issue (Autesserre, 2006). The bilateral integration of the enclaves thereby engaged in an assessment of a solution of a spatially localised issue and its immediate impacts in terms of intangible, non-local considerations of territoriality and sovereignty. Assessments as such neglect the necessity to comprehend resolution as contingent to its specific spatial context of operation

(Thomassen, 2012). For instance, the statelessness of the enclaves prompted the state to adopt integration as the means of resolution of its associated conflicts of deprivations. The integrative measures implemented in the enclaves engage with an essentialised, reductive understanding of the issue itself. It prioritised the enclaves' integration on the reversal of inequalities of deprivation and the establishment of relations with its surrounding locales - conditions that were already established at the local level through their own capacities. Despite their integration and the introduction of rehabilitative measures, concerns surrounding the provision of necessities of daily rations, housing, healthcare, and employment, continue at the local level with the state now existing as the only mediator of such assertions. The disintegration of local armatures of support and the polarisation of local claims along older, immiscible identities, the state has ironically brought forth conditions of statelessness in the form it was perceived to exist in the enclave in its absence.

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Chapter 3

New Local and Indeterminate National: A Background to Local Conflicts in the Enclaves in India

The 'Local' and 'National' in Bilateralism

Conventional, statist readings of bilateral relations presuppose it to be based on a larger discourse of comprehending the national interests of the two states party to an agreement (Pasvolsky, 1936; Smith & Tsatsas, 2002, p. 29). The national interest of a particular state is presumed to be mirrored in its progressions of interpolation initiated in responding to critical issues both within and beyond its borders. This traditionalist view on national issues and national interests overlooks an entire gamut of local subjects and productions which texture the manifestation of conditions prompting the state's involvement. While the strength of a bilateral relationship is judged on the basis of how effectively the interests of its principal actors are realised and pursued; questions emerge regarding its applicability as a process of conflict resolution or national interest attainment when issues it seeks to engage with persist at a local level of operation. In the expected consequences of such applications, the efficacy of bilateral engagement is correlated with the attainment of national issues which have been articulated at a 'national' level of discernment (Jackson, 2003) despite the fact that most issues, although tied to such normative idealisations of state interests, operate within localised contexts of actuality.

An alternative reading of bilateralism which positions the local as a unit of analysis can offset practicalisation along traditionalist lines of national interest. To this end, conflicts at the borders of nation states have been selected as a point of inquiry of the study because although confined to their immediate sites of operation, their occurrences are often conflated with national discourses of strategic security and preservation of territorial integrity. This transforms an issue that is localised with regard to its area of operation and sectors of immediate impact, into an issue of national importance, often without attributing due prudence to the local implications of this transferral. Viewing local issues from a national interest focused perspective obscures the nuances and complexities of the conditions of its existence and/or perpetuation, with regard to the specificities of its operation within a particular 'locale'. The consequential problematique of differentiation necessitates a theoretical shift in recognising as separable, the categories of local and the national in understanding the emergence of conflicts and the modus of state intervention at these peripheral sites (Das 2003, 2004; Samaddar 1998, 2002; van Schendel 2005; Banerjee 2010).

The category of the local appears rooted to its immediate spatialised existence, but often its machinations are qualified by the designs of national relevance extended by the states in case of any overlap of its interests in these sites. Therefore, the national appears to exist only at the level of state perception, which is moderated by both systemic and structural concerns. Simultaneously, the interests articulated at these levels of perception are rendered adjustable to these systemic or environmental shifts. Beyond such frameworks of classification, all issues can be objectively determined to exist within the confines of localised domains of occurrence that remain. It can only be taken out of its

immediate context of existence through emphasising it at the level of perception by the state to be viewed as fundamentally related to its critical axioms. Despite tethering these issues to reflections of national concern, its incidence continues to remain confined to the local level; while projections of their probable implications are perceived by the state as carrying ramifications beyond the locale.

The necessity for intervention in local issues can also be determined by an assessment of what constitutes the national interests of a country at a particular point in time. Therefore, certain issues can be prioritised or passed over on the basis of whether they contribute to the realisation of a state's national interest objectives. Since state governance and its interactions with similar units contained within regional and world systems are carried out on the basis of national interests, relations amongst two nations are also likely to be based upon similar considerations underlined by notions of competing state authorities (Jackson, 2003). The articulation of these varied interests is based on a subjective ordering of issues based on the manufactured credo of the state, or its fundamental principles of organisation (Welch, 2005). However, the usage of abstractions to justify state action does not preclude the prevalent subjectivities in its determination. Simply put, national interest is what the nation, that is, its decision makers decide it to be, based on their interpretations of state ethos.

The narratives of the national discourse come to represent a mega-narrative, constituted around specific identified interests related to the supercilious idealisations of the state. This separates discursive engagement with issues from contingencies of specificity, which account for 'local' interests and implications of their separation from all aspects of

discernment or action. Therefore, the 'local' is viewed to be a spatial category that does not necessarily portend any implications on the larger 'national' discourse and are therefore consigned to the realm of the domestic as subjects of management and governance. Similarly, in bilateral engagements over shared concerns, the 'national' becomes a public affair, whereas the 'local' is relegated to the realm of 'private affairs' and 'internal matters'[35], and thereby beyond the purview of such frameworks. Yet, even when under certain circumstances, the 'local' carries the potential of transforming into a subject of national interest; it is more often than not subsumed into the national narrative, as a 'national' issue. By securitising a particular issue, the state's capacity to disassociate the local public from their processes of local production and engagement with its settings (Buzan et al., 1998), can disrupt localised mechanisms of stabilisation to understand how its inhabitants interact with their extant circumstances. The absence of local points of engagement addresses such issues as a precondition towards attaining a larger national interest objective, rather than on the apparent necessity of constructive intervention[36].

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[35] Adherence to such variegations and overlaps of domains of state action can be problematised in terms of the traditional understanding of 'politics' as public affair. This can potentially de-necessitate the need to explore into the more private aspects of an issue that is realised through interactions, exchanges and conflicts at the individual level. All these conditions can critically determine the nature of intervention and also its projected efficacy. The potential for drawing out a comprehensive analysis of complex social functions or processes often demands such deeper forays into its underlying machinations; even those that come to be textured by individual subjectivities. Therefore in understanding conflicts and disputes that exist amongst states, the local interaction with these conditions of existence must constitute a focus of inquiry.

[36] At times, the absence of state-centric concerns in some local conflicts allows them to remain confined at the local level. Whereas, multiple local issues can also viewed in conjunction or addressed in isolation, which may or may not have implications on the national interest of any one particular state, but the resolution of which may lead to the establishment, stabilisation and/or prolongation of the ties between two states, which may constitute a national level interest for those states seeking a stronger bilateral association.

Regardless of the preconditions for state intervention, the representation of the local in such discernments appears to be constructed through the focus of the state, as it comes to be engaged with on the basis of their national interests. Ascribing to a subjectivist position on national interest formation, state intervention in matters whereby the 'local' is transformed into a 'national' issue are only initiated, if the underlying conditions of an issue are viewed to be pertinent to the attainment of their national interests. Subsequently, the 'local' issues in their subsumption under a national narrative remain unaddressed since their evaluation comes to be based on putative constructions of national interests rather than on local concerns. As a result, the local narratives underlying the national point of its engagement remain outside of national or bilateral considerations of engagement, and the issue comes to be represented through a centrally articulated discourse deriving from the state's national interests. Even though conflicts at the local level are not necessarily viewed as issues of national concern, their occurrence at the borders between states obliges adjustment to considerations of state interests. As an effect, the whole discourse of the 'local' is appropriated to convert it into a national issue, for its subsequent addressing at a national level.

The transformation of local issues into matters of national importance therefore is not dictated by the necessity of that situation demanding its appropriation and subsequent resolution, but by a state's national interests. The factors determining and dictating the transformation of the 'local' into the 'national' can be derived from the idea of securitisation[37] which discusses similar themes in terms of the appropriation of certain

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[37] The term securitisation refers to the process by which the state acquires and transforms certain spheres of activity into 'objects of security'. Upon acquisition they assume the authority to function exclusively in that domain in terms of structuring its prevalent discourses. This theoretical precept

localised aspects under the exclusive purview of state action, but remains silent on the process of determining what constitutes an interest of the state. The inconsistencies in the appropriation of issues by the state can be viewed as commensurate with its tendency to assess them from the lens of their national interests, rather than on the basis of necessity for intercession. Instances of partial, issue-based engagement, which escapes logics or necessity of consistent intercession in conflict settings by the state, can be found in instances of bilateral resolution conflicts. The border as a site of inquiry into these processes also reveals discernible forms of interaction between the local and the state, in conflict settings.

The resolution of the enclave issues at a bilateral level, between India and Bangladesh, was finalised in 2015 as a result of the alignment of their respective interests and expectations surrounding the projected outcomes (both shared and specific) of the exchange of these erstwhile stateless spaces and its residents. The prioritising of a local issue based on the subsequent alignment of the two states' individual interests was expedited by the commonly recognised need for regional consolidation (Dent, 2006) for which regional stability emerged as a precondition. These shared needs and concerns permeated the national interest outlooks of the two states, and proved to be the necessary incentive to address any pre-existing issues and conflicts between them. Subsequently, the enclave issue was prioritised given the complications it engendered in stabilising their shared border. Therefore suggestions towards integrating them within their respective

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identifies the potential for the appropriation of certain areas of state or public action as an exclusive domain of state discourse making, based on the existence of a real or potential source of threat. The framework is based around concerns of state security and after the end of the Cold War, its expanded categories spanning non-conventional paradigms of society, economics, and the environment (Graeger, 1996, p. 109).

national territories and frameworks of citizenship were seen as the logical steps towards attaining their common goals of regional stability. However, the eventual resolution of the issue came to be determined by the convergence of their interests with the precise configuration of systemic conditions, as can be educed from previous attempts which were unsuccessful in bringing forth a mutually agreeable solution to the same issue. The Look East[38] and Act East[39] outlooks provided that foundation on which the national interests of these two countries aligned. These approaches necessitated a stable border as a prerequisite for furthering their interests for regional and extra-regional integration and therefore, the resolution of the enclave issue was deemed a bilateral priority.

The persistence of problems and the emergence of new issues in the enclave locals after the implementation of the LBA in 2015 may be attributed to the divergence of opinions surrounding the issue that exist at the local level. These discrepancies can be viewed in the context of the state's understanding of these localised conflicts and issues, which appeared to be dissociated from the variable realities of their operation at the ground level, as experienced by the inhabitants of these spaces and adjacent locales. National interest based perspective obscured narratives and lived experiences underlying the quotidian negotiations in bypassing relative isolations and its associated deprivations

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[38] India's Look East policy is a diplomatic initiative that aims to establish economic and strategic relations with the Southeast Asian geopolitical and economic region as an effort to cement its status as a regional power and a strategic counterweight to the influence of the People's Republic of China. The policy was introduced in 1992 to recover from the loss of the strategic partner in the former Soviet Union. In an effort to fill that gap India sought to build up a relationship with the USA and its allies in Southeast Asia.

[39] The Act East outlook is a revision of the Look East Policy's outlook and is considered an upgrade on its predecessor. Re-introduced in 2012, its objectives are consistent with the Look East policy, only demanding for a more proactive role in their realisation. The initiative advocates intensive and continuous engagement with Southeast Asian countries in the field of connectivity, trade, culture, defence and people-to-people-contact at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

experienced by its different locales. Instead, the resolution process came to be directed by the states' analysis of the conflict based on essentialised perusals of actorscapes, intentions and implications. These identifications remained confined to its central purpose of its preservation through the attainment of national interests (Schmidt, 1990). In this case, the representation of the enclave issue emerges as being tied to the preservation of national territories and the recognition of its resident populations, and thereby reduced the underlying complexities of the local issue to predominant themes of state interest underlying this particular issue. To this end, the research selects the case of the India-Bangladesh border enclaves' bilateral resolution to understand the impacts of bilateralism on the operation or perceptions of its more localised productions, and vice-versa. Elucidating the details of the ethnographic study of two former enclave spaces in India, this chapter will explore the conflicts that have arisen between old and new identities (Jones 2009; Shewly 2013) and territorialities at the local levels, and how they have interacted and contested with one another following the integration of the India-Bangladesh border enclaves, and draw out critical discernments on its impacts on the bilateral relations between the two states.

Rationale of Approach

Studies on enclaves have tapered off ever since their integration into national space after 2015. As a result, forays into reviewing their contemporary histories, relationship with the locales in which they are spatially embedded, their interactions with non-enclave locals, and the impacts of integration have remained unaddressed. In the literature reviewed, their erstwhile stateless existence is represented as absolute, and

therefore has eluded deeper engagements with localised matrices. This absolutism also underlines the impacts of the resolution of their statelessness through their integration into national territory and the insertion of the state into such spaces. These representations have not only textured our understanding of these spaces and its inhabitant communities but also the efficacy of the resolution that determined their integration into the state. Such notions stand to be problematised based on the divergences that this study has elicited through an engagement with local narratives and lived experiences from the enclaves and adjacent locals. This leads to the establishment of a reconfigured and more accurate understanding of local realities and their interactions with extant circumstances of their localised struggles against their perceived conditional and regulated existences. By predicating our understanding of the bilateral resolution process on such localised framings, it completely upends prevalent understandings of the enclave dispute and its associated bilateral and local concerns.

The following sections illustrate the nature of local existence in the selected sites of study. The section additionally outlines the multiple narratives emanating from these locales in tracing the nature of interactions that exist between the enclave and non-enclave locals in navigating the complexities of their specific circumstances. Despite very obvious differentiations that existed between these two outlined local categories, emanating from their associations, or lack thereof, with the state; a common recognition of belonging to the same locale often constituted common grounds for mutually determined adaptations. Such negotiations between local actors emerge as a critical point of engagement for the study, to understand how the local space and its constitutive relations have been impacted upon by bilateral policies spanning the timeline of India-

Bangladesh relations; and also how the local responds to such transformations or regulations.

The following sections also outline the multiple local conflicts that exist in these locales today, as a consequence of bilateral intervention necessitated on the realisation of national interests. The adaptations of the local in response allude to the ability to self-manage and regulate the unaccounted impacts of the same, which are often obscured by the rhetoric of successful state intercession and unsubstantiated claims of resolution. By illustrating the nature of local grievances spanning both enclave and non-enclave locals, and through an exploration of their interactions, a reconfigured understanding of the limits of enclave statelessness based on the assessment of the local impacts of bilateral resolution, and the adaptations made towards bypassing an overarching sense of local detachment from the state are brought forth.

Sheupara: Former Bangladeshi Enclave in India

The former Bangladeshi enclave, *chhit* Sheupara[40], Mekhliganj, located in the Cooch Behar district of West Bengal state was selected as one of the field sites for this study. The enclave exhibited certain requirements that were deemed vital for the study; most significantly, its proximity to sites of local contestation surrounding the enclave issue, as well as its relative distance from the border, in comparison to other local sites. For these reasons, the study of local narratives drawn from the inhabitants of *chhit* Sheupara and its surrounding locales permitted an analysis of the impacts of bilateral and local contestations. The ethnography of this locale presents a critical overview and

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[40] The names of the specific enclave sites have been changed.

reconfiguration of prevalent discourses on enclaves, and its transformations by engaging with crucial junctures in its historiography. The engagement with local narratives surrounding the exchange of enclaves between India and Bangladesh through different stages of its fruition, have been brought forth to understand the impacts of bilateral mediation in local sites of conflict.

The former enclave is situated within the Mekhliganj municipality division, located in the Cooch Behar district of the West Bengal state. With regard to its settings and proximity to other key sites, the enclave is located 10 kilometres away from the TBC and shares a border with DA which exists as a part of Bangladesh today, connected through the corridor. DA's nearest boundary is only a kilometre away from the former enclave of Sheupara, and is marked off by border pillars, guarded by shifts of Border Security Force (BSF), sentries that keep watch through the day. The closest town to the site is Siliguri which is a four hour bus journey away from Mekhliganj, with buses plying between these two termini till evening. Local transportation is limited and at later hours, it is near absent. The frequency of buses plying the route connecting the site has increased recently as a result of a shift in the local workforce to the more developed town-centres of Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Moynaguri in search of more stable and regular opportunities for employment. However, this shift is observable primarily amongst the populations residing in the more developed half of Mekhliganj, while a majority of the former enclave residents are employed as local agricultural labour.

The Mekhliganj subdivision exhibits two distinct sides to it. As one moves from the more developed side of the bloc towards the former enclave of Sheupara there is a noticeable transition in housing. The 'town', which is what locals refer to the more developed part

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of Mekhliganj has cement houses of not more than two or three levels. The variety of shops and services available there reflects the prevalent demands and purchasing capabilities of those residing in the 'town', representing a relative and limited form of affluence. Within the locale where the former enclave is situated, the housing transitions on to asbestos sheet houses and thatched huts, interspersed with the occasional cement house in various stages of construction. Shops present there, mostly sell petty goods, lottery tickets and also re-selling subsidised rations drawn from state-run shops. The pace of life in the two sides of Mekhliganj is also manifestly contrasting. The residents of the more developed side of the 'town' are employed in services in the surrounding towns, and mostly constitute local families who sold their land and moved towards this half of the subdivision, which developed around it's only bus terminus. The rest of the local residents are usually self-employed and own pharmacies, grocery stores, eateries and mobile repair shops within the 'town'. Moving towards the erstwhile enclave site, two kilometres away from the 'town' side of Mekhliganj, the nature of employment changes and the locals there are mostly employed as agricultural labourers, pickers and workers in the local tea-estates. Some are self-employed, running small shops selling articles of daily use and basic rations; or even as electric rickshaw drivers.

A majority of the families residing in *chhit* Sheupara migrated from DA in the years leading up to and immediately following to the 1971 War. This wave of migration was a direct outcome of the violence which had engulfed the erstwhile East Pakistan in the years leading up to its liberation. Mass killings, disenfranchisement, legal persecution and repression of the mass media were some of the measures adopted by the Pakistani government in administering its Eastern extension (Alamgir and D'Costa, 2011). These

events sparked off a flight of Bengali-Hindus from what was still East-Pakistan, and later Bangladesh into India to escape the persecutions they continued to face at the local level due to their discordant religious identity. The families that settled in the area migrated from Bangladeshi villages situated along the international border, some even having moved from Indian enclaves within Bangladesh, most notably DA. The families residing in Mekhliganj are predominantly Bengali *Khotriyos*, with *Brahmins* and Muslims constituting a minority in the local demography. The former enclave is home to 38 families scattered across multiple clusters of settlements; some as big as groups of ten or more while some are completely isolated or exist in smaller groupings of two or three. Of all the families within this former enclave, only one has resided in that space for over three generations; from before the Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

These migrating communities settled down mostly in the local enclave lands, while those with acquaintances or family were put up in their homes. This transposition worked out well at the local level. The influx of displaced families provided holders/owners of enclave lands with the perfect opportunity to offload these disputed landholdings. They established their ownership over enclave land through indications of inherited possessions, and were mostly non-residents. This configuration allowed the inbound populaces to acquire their 'own' land by purchasing or renting plots in the enclaves from these non-local land owners. The new entrants were unaware of the disputed status of these landholdings, and therefore were not hesitant in settling down there. The primary reason for this abortive sale of land was the insecurities surrounding their unsettled status, and whether these parcels would be absorbed and subsequently redistributed by the state. Since the transfer of these lands did not involve any formal modalities of ownership,

subsequently their transfers were also conducted informally where no official documents of citizenship were demanded from the purchasers in conducting the transaction. As a result, even those who were not previously enclave residents in Bangladesh now found themselves in the peculiar position of being enclaved in the land they had relocated to. These changing spatialities and the subsequent identities of the communities inhabiting the enclaves, demands a reconfiguration of our understanding of enclaves and their uniform representation in terms of their constituent demography and the spatial limits of their statelessness.

Adjacent Locales and Sites of Local Conflict

The second point of inquiry constitutes adjacent local sites of conflict in the areas surrounding the TBC complex and that of the former Bangladeshi enclave of Dahagram-Angarpota, which now exists as a part of Bangladesh's national territory connected to the mainland through the Corridor, all proximate to the primary site of study in Mekhliganj. The TBC is 10 kilometres away from Mekhliganj. The Dhapra main road which connects the two points has moderate to heavy traffic flow which is regulated once it arrives at the TBC complex, where the road is heavily guarded by both BSF and BGB guards at its two exit points, intersecting the other at the centre of the Corridor complex. The two roads intersecting at the complex connect Patgram in Bangladesh to DA, while the Dhapra road is a major motorway connecting Mekhliganj and Kuchlibari.

People from Bangladesh passing through are daily commuters heading in and out of Dahagram-Angarpota carrying supplies on *totos*(electric powered rickshaws) and motorcycles. Indian day-trippers throng the corridor around mid-afternoon, some even

staying back till the evening's flag lowering ceremony using the corridor complex for social gatherings like 'picnics' and 'get-togethers'. The occasional luxury car with sightseers and tourist vehicles passes through from the Bangladeshi side although not as frequently as those on the Indian side. Along the fence one can see fields under cultivation; mostly tea, jute, corn and rice. Along regular intervals there are manned check posts, and less recurrent numbered gates through which Indian farmers who still own land on the other side of the border gain access. Land up to 200 metres beyond the border fence belongs to Indian farmers, with border pillars and watch-stations located at their edge marking off the beginning of Bangladeshi territory. The people working on these lands have been provided with identification papers that allow them access to their fields between 7 am and 5 pm. The limited number of access points on the fence means that farmers who own land near the Patagram opening have to walk a good kilometre or two to reach their fields. Additionally, the restrictions imposed on taking motorised carriers for crops beyond the border have made the effort of ploughing and harvesting time-consuming and cumbersome. The farmers can harvest only as much as they can manage to carry back through the course of day, as a result lengthening the process, expending more money and also facing loss of crops. Grievances surrounding loss of land to fencing were frequently articulated by the residents of the surrounding villages of the Kuchlibari area, on the Indian side of the border.

The line of separation between India and the Dahagram-Angarpota extension is marked by pillars today. Participant narratives elicited accounts of how the locals navigated the border before the ceding of DA to Bangladesh, but such memories stand in stark opposition to the current reality of regulations they exist in today. Before the signing of

the LBA a considerable stretch of the border remained unfenced and at certain points unmanned by border patrol. Perceptions of the spatial limits to their mobilities and interactions were established in the local imagination through stories of abduction by those on the other side. Each story is similar in terms of its central narrative and theme, but the locations of these narrated events change with the areas in which they are recounted. In effect, these narratives served to not only enforce the spatial limits, but also delimited the socio-cultural limits of their locality in determining permissibility of interactions with communities across the border. Over time, the newer, material borders and limits to local mobility appears to have been more or less cemented in the local imagination through these fictive accounts and retellings; defining the shifts and continuities in their lives, mobilities and associations.

The major grievances surrounding the establishment of the TBC, outlined briefly in the preceding section, appear to be predicated on two issues both stemming from the local level. Firstly, the ceding of land (Dahagram-Angarpota) to another sovereign state; and secondly, the loss of cultivable farm land as a result of the building of the corridor; were the principal local grievances emerging from participant narratives of local residents from these sites.

"One day I see the place (land) cordoned off with barbed wire and the BSF telling us that we are not allowed to pass through" (Field Interview, 27.12.2018)

Participant observations at the TBC site and its adjacent villages of Kuchlibari brought forth narratives of local objections surrounding the ceding of territory for the corridor; which constitutes an important point of inquiry for the study to understand how local

grievances were shaped by the bilateral exchange of enclaves. Consequently, perceptions of statelessness of the enclaves could only be understood in conjunction with the interactions of its inhabitants with other local actors. Thereby, prompting its selection as the secondary site of study. Cons (2013) categorised Dahagram-Angarpota as a site of transferred communal violence and tensions during both the 1965 War between India and Pakistan and the 1971 Liberation War. The occurrence of such events in close proximity to the local enclaves has impacted upon the local histories of their interactions with non-enclave locals and their perceptions vis-à-vis one another. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of the localised productions of the space and its framings of perceptions of marginality and statelessness that undergirds the locale.

Additionally, these sites also reveal the ramifications that bilateral conflicts surrounding the India-Bangladesh border have had on its adjacent locales. The Dahagram-Angarpota enclave, the former composite enclave has encountered local mobilisations which mirrored the contesting nationalist narratives of India-Pakistan relations at different points of their bilateral history[41]. Dahagram-Angarpota's conversion from a stateless enclave (the largest regional enclave) to an indisputable part of Bangladeshi territory, have shifted the local historiography from past articulations of belonging and the older spatial perceptions of resident communities, and therefore emerge as critical points of inquiry into the impacts of such changes on local perceptions underlying interactions

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[41] Local conflicts came to mirror national narratives of conflict between India and Pakistan during this period, and this often prompted the escalation of minor local disputes during this period of tension, by tying to more complex leitmotifs of conflicts over territory; further complicated by the perceived irreconcilability of the religious and national identities associated with those on either side of the border, regardless of their statelessness. This has been engaged in detail by the research in the case study on the Dahagram-Angarpota transfer and its local implications.

between enclave and non-enclave residents, as well as local views on the impacts of bilateral mediation.

The broader themes of engagement with the local narratives drawn from the ethnography have been dealt with in the subsequent sections. They have been categorised around understanding the local productions of the enclave borderscape through the relationships shared by its constituent actor groups, and state's production of peripheries and statelessness through the socio-spatial divergences in the operation and reach of its powers.

The Variegated Enclave Locale

Historical representations refer to enclave spaces as continually inhabited throughout the history of their existence as disconnected *chhitmohols* of a principality, till their re-classification as state enclaves subsequent to the Partition of 1947. Contrary to these depictions, narrative accounts from enclave inhabitants who have resided in the local space over three generations, state that such spaces did not always exist as populated territories. In fact, there existed pockets of unoccupied land, which were cartographically classified as enclaves, and eventually came to be populated over three distinct waves of displacement from East Pakistan and later, Bangladesh. This perception has been considerably shaped by the representation of these spaces in academic literature and state releases. These sources have recurrently failed to account for the divergences that are carried in local histories – spanning the emergence of these spaces and their subsequent transformation into stateless territories, and up to the point of their integration. Representations dissociated from local realities enduringly portray these

spaces as populated pockets that due to the circumstances of modern state making and bordering practices were dissociated from the larger territorial spaces, they were historically a part of; firstly, the Princely State[42] and later the modern, postcolonial state. However, ground realities remain contrary to such perceptions as these spaces often existed as uninhabitable stretches, due to factors such as their size, their location relative to other villages or local topographies, and proximity to the border.

Often, enclaves which used to be occupied lost a considerable section of its population, through departures brought forth by the uncertainty of life that afflicted its inhabitants. The outflow of populations from the enclaves were often counteracted by a reverse inflow in certain enclaves, especially those situated closer to the India-Bangladesh border which were located in a more favourable position to receive these influxes. These displacements coincided with three major events that shaped the prevalent political and socio-cultural dynamics of the India-Bangladesh border region and its enclaves, and continue to impact on the ways in which local perceptions surrounding India-Bangladesh bilateralism surrounding the management of the border and its associated issues have been shaped. The three events which coincided with these three waves of resettlement were – the independence of India and the subsequent Partition (1947), the Liberation War and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country (1971), and finally the establishment of the TBC (1992). The representation of the enclave as a uniform category of inhabited pockets within the larger national space can therefore be problematised when

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[42] Princely States were semi-sovereign principalities that existed within the Indian subcontinent during the period of colonial rule, up till 1975 when the kingdom of Sikkim decided through a popular referendum to join India. These territories had not been annexed by the British and were not a part of British India, but existed as subsidiaries to the colonial government (Das, 1990)

viewed against local histories emerging from the experiences of the people who inhabited them.

The cross-flow of individuals from enclaves on one side of the border to another was largely driven by the narratives of the Partition that were based upon the incongruity of the two major regional religious identities, Hindus, and Muslims. The concentration of these influxes from Bangladesh within the enclaves on the Indian side of the border can be understood as a consequence of the absence of official modalities for establishing proprietorship over the space, and therefore mainly relied on informal provision of inhabitancy rights by those who claimed original ownership over these spaces. The proof of ownership of land was established by papers that had been provided by the Princely State of Cooch Behar and held no ostensible value or validity after 1949, which was when it joined the Indian state. However, till the provision of rights to their land holdings in January 2019, enclave residents used these documents as a proof of their ownership[43].

Accounts of relocations were frequently recalled as a necessary step by those who shifted to India, by invoking narratives of discrimination along religious and communal lines, which they faced in their original spaces of residence. These relocations were prompted by the incompatibilities of religious identities carried by inhabitants on either side of the border and further compounded by the anxieties prevalent in their quotidian interactions with the more socially dominant groups in these enclaves. The lack of state presence and

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[43] In most cases, original owners were not enclave residents, but were local residents from nearby villages or towns. These individuals came to possess a significant amount of the land in these enclaves due to sales owing to uncertainty of their final status, at lower than average prices given the lack of any official state recognition. These now singly-owned large land holdings had been converted to small scale tea plantations, where enclave residents often secured employment as pickers.

the localised existence and expressions of competing nationalisms only exacerbated these rearrangements of stateless, enclave populations.

"We could not step out after sunset. One time they had abducted one girl. She is still in Bangladesh. Has a child now. Fearing the same we would not let our womenfolk step out of the house. After a day's work they could not go to the temple. They would pass remarks at us in the markets, asking 'How much cow meat should I give?' Sometimes they would even throw it at us. During any festival or occasion we would have to stop our celebrations when they would read their prayers. Otherwise they would cause trouble. They would forcefully seize our land and burn the ownership papers. There were more of them. They were united" (Field Interview, 30.1.2018)

Movement across the border and resettlement in the Bangladeshi enclaves situated within India was a pattern mostly limited to the communities who were residents of the Indian enclaves on the Bangladeshi side of the border. However, some of the residents in these spaces did come from non-enclave locales of Bangladesh and also from within India, since constructing a house in the enclaves invited no processes of verification or official oversight by the state. Since most of these relocations came in the form of groups from one specific area across the border, they were mostly limited to the enclave residents; uncertainty and inability to constitute local majoritarian status being the major push factors.

Although it appears as though that the prevalence of communal tensions were the main factor prompting these relocations, it should be noted that certain rearrangements were not voluntary, but were carried out in the form of forceful dislocation, often with the support of the local population in collusion with the local administration. In narrative

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accounts drawn from the field, especially in the context of the reverse flow of Muslim families back to Bangladesh, local narratives point to how narratives of religious violence meted out against the Hindu enclave populations in Bangladesh were often mobilised by local political actors to expedite a reaction from the local population to dislodge the few Muslim residents within certain enclaves.

There were assertions of communal and majoritarian incompatibilities that were stated as reasons behind the resettlements at both sites of inquiry; traced back to movements prior and subsequent to the formal integration of the enclaves under LBA of 2015. These claims of harassment at the hands of the Muslim majority population in the Indian enclaves in Bangladesh, drawn from the research's target demographic from the selected field sites, constituted one of the main reasons for their translocation to India. However, none of the accounts attributed religious differences as the only reason behind their shift. Instead, these remembrances were often couched in a historicised notional association with the state and its majoritarian, cultural identity which these communities exhorted upon in recalling the reasons behind their relocation to India.

"Most Hindus moved out of Dahagram and came to India. We had nothing there; nobody looked out for us either. We never ate their salt; we are Indians. We were born on Indian soil, so we are Indians. We have believed that throughout. The enclaves belonged to India." (Field Interview, 8.11.2018)

Accounts of discrimination however were never one-sided. In fact, retaliatory claims were also narrated by Muslim inhabitants of these contested sites who were displaced as a result of these local upheavals. Such claims have eventually fallen through the gaps in the

majoritarian construals of local history, which positions these struggles as the rightful expressions of local assertion over spaces and peoples considered to be an integral part of their socio-spatial constitution. Therefore, the dynamics in the enclave were never lopsided in terms of passivity of one group against the other, but it appears as though the intensity of action or retaliation in local conflicts was pointedly structured by a particular groups' numerical preponderance. Language did not feature as a meter of identification or discrimination amongst the locals, but appears to be an issue that has taken deeper roots in the adjacent state of Assam. In Bengal the problem appears to be pivoted on the apprehensions that the local Hindu populations hold about their Bangladeshi Muslim counterparts, textured by the nature of prevalent bilateral state relations, which trickle down to impress upon local perceptions of cross-border communities. Even though, the localised manifestation of the issue played out along communal lines, there was a noticeable tendency to separate the local Muslim population and those from Bangladesh in local perceptions of the 'other'. The latter were viewed as distinguishable from the local population because of the 'outward' significations of their faith, based on which they were separated from the more spatially proximate Muslim communities. Acceptance of their local presence was often predicated on views of similarities in terms of appearances with the local Hindu majority, and their embedding within a locale that exhibited very outward productions of its communal preponderance marginalised any expressions of divergence from the local narratives surrounding incidences of conflict and local violence.

"Muslims there are different. You can tell the difference between Muslims from Bangladesh and those from here. Muslims here have become more like us, from staying here for so many years."

(Field Interview, 15.11.2018)

The three distinct waves of resettlement, as has been mentioned before, resulted in a reshuffling of prevalent social and political dynamics within the enclaves. Differences in the levels of both local and intra-enclave acceptance towards these newer entrants also emerged in relation to their time of entry into India. However, the provision of state citizenship to the enclave residents has not undercut such differentiations at the local level, but instead augmented them. Levels of local acceptance exercised towards these residents through interactions at the local level with non-enclave residents continue to exhibit variations in relation to their time of entry into India. Additionally, these new settlements also carved out a local existence and identity beyond that of prevalent identifications tied to a particular enclave, with each cluster now identified locally and within the enclaves by the names they were given by its residents. As a result, the uniform enclave identity (van Schendel, 2002) which existed prior to receiving the newer entrants came to be fractured into multiple identities, each cluster now existing within the larger enclave space, replete with its own unique set of social and cultural dynamics. In the case of Sheupara, which is constituted of multiple, fractured enclave clusters, the newer settlements adopted their own names[44], fracturing local spatial identifications of the enclave along multiple strands.

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[44] In certain cases, the naming of these settlements was based on the collective, religious or sectarian identity of the residents, their profession or at times after the places they have migrated from.

The different timelines of entry into the country has shaped the nature and extent of local acceptance extended by the non-enclave locals towards these populations. Original inhabitants[45] and the families that relocated during the period following the Partition of 1947 have been virtually assimilated into the local milieu. The same however, does not hold true for those who moved in the period between the 1971 Liberation War till the exchange of the enclaves in 2015. The position of these local enclave populations on the issue of exchange and the state's conferring of rights and citizenship on these communities also varies in accordance with their time of arrival to the country. The different iterations of these claims at the local level have often constituted the cause of disagreements, and have also generated differentiated perceptions of belonging amongst the former enclave residents, and other local actors, which manifest in the variations of their numerous interactions and exchanges.

The claims for aid and welfare (both local, and state-provided) by those sections which moved to India in the years before 1971 are accorded more legitimacy amongst enclave residents, simply based on the extended nature of their isolation from the state. Contrarily, the newer entrants negate the genuine-ness of such claims by stating that they had already been entitled to state aid in the form of land, cattle and other amenities in the wake of the 1947 and 1971 Partitions which they claim have been squandered by selling them to meet their requirements for subsistence. Correspondingly, demands made on the state by the newer entrants are invalidated by the original inhabitants by linking these communities to contested identities of the 'illegal immigrant' or 'encroacher' that also carry communal undertows associated locally with the identity of Bangladeshi Muslims.

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[45] Referring to those families that have resided in the enclaves for more than three or up to four generations

Therefore, within the enclaves, the assertion of belonging, and validity of residence of the different settlement clusters is adjudged at the local level against their respective year of arrival. This points towards the existence of a local that is variegated on the basis of their specific experiential construals of statelessness and isolation, which has impacted upon their perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable solution to its associated concerns, limitations and deprivations, and their interactions with other local actors.

Citizenship Claims, Local Identifications and Exclusions

A citizen, by definition, is viewed as a political subject who has political rights and duties; and to whom the state is accountable and responsible for welfare and safety as the sovereign authority. However, such conceptualisations are premised on the existence of an environment that is conducive towards exercising one's rightful responsibilities and rights as a citizen, wherever they may reside; and wherein the state provides the basic tenets required for ensuring their welfare, safety and security. This straightforward conceptualisation of citizenship and its operation fails to account for the nature of its existence, perception and operation in and around stateless pockets, or how such ideas are locally produced in engaging with the state. In the case of the enclaves, the idea of territoriality naturally gets tied up with claims of citizenship (Harms, 2015). Even so when one views its existence closely at the local level it becomes apparent that citizenship continues to be a fragile and contested notion in post-colonial states like India, and even more so within its erstwhile stateless pockets and its surrounding locales. The legitimacy of individual claims over citizenship remains uncertain as a consequence (Randeria, 2003; Baviskar, 2004). However, in the absence of stable notions of belonging and claims to legitimation of access and mobilities by the state, the local steps in to fill

this void. In understanding such localised processes of supplanting an absent state, the study investigates the extension of local citizenship to these erstwhile stateless residents and the implications they carried in shaping the larger local identity, and delineating the local position, rights and duties of the erstwhile stateless enclave populations. The findings presented argue for the necessity of a closer examination of the various understandings of citizenship as a concept and practice that exist at the local level. As this section will illustrate, such claims were not always perpetrated as active confrontations with state/non-state actors or through dissident behaviour. Instead, the local demonstrated through its machinations that such identifications could be cemented locally by performing various acts associated with the practice of citizenship, even if not formally recognised by the state. Such adaptations have mostly remained absent from national narratives but the historical interfaces of the local with its bureaucratic and political expressions of power, although marginal, remains an undeniable fact.

Although the enclave residents received citizenship officially in 2015, a substantial portion of their population was able to secure voter identification cards prior to that by citing the addresses of family members and acquaintances who resided outside of these enclave spaces. Participants' narratives suggest that this allowed them to secure access to institutions of local governance and administration, the public distribution system, education, healthcare and institutions of financial management. It enabled the enclave residents to assert their identity as 'equal' local citizens through the act of voting, which they claim allowed them to express their association and allegiance to the state. Although voting rights had been secured by a large section of the enclave inhabitants much before 2015, their residences were still not recognised as a part of the local constituency.

Consequently, they voted for fringe benefits such as employment in petty jobs, eligibility for availing credit and loans from local institutions, and other forms of assistance from the local political leadership, which were promised and distributed informally.

Voting also enabled the former enclave residents to assert their identity as citizens at the local levels, which they considered their due, given that some of them had been a resident of the country, albeit in the enclaves, for over seventy years. An analysis of narratives on the practice of voting suggest that the registration of names in the municipality's electoral roll was considered locally as a credible validation of their citizenship claims, as a result of which the later waves of resettlement after 1971, which continued till 2003 were concentrated around the edges of the village, that is, at the limits of the municipality's jurisdiction. This was done in the hopes of securing the municipality vote, as opposed to the *'onchol vote'* or the village Panchayat vote as a means of distancing themselves from the enclaved locales in an effort to legitimise their presence as local residents in these villages, and escape the historical aspersions that resettled enclave residents were cast under at the local level.

"Getting a voter card would ensure that we get some benefits, no matter how small. And if our name was on the list we could say that we are locals. Having a voter card enabled us to get work outside. The youngsters did not want to work in the fields. They wanted to go outside." (Field Interview, 13.11.2018)

Citizenship constituted one of the major issues around which the exchange of enclaves and its populations was envisioned. To remedy the conditions of statelessness the inhabitants of these erstwhile enclave spaces existed within, their integration through the

provision of citizenship was prioritised as a necessary point of bilateral resolution. The LBA's directives concerning the enclaves provided a choice to the enclave residents in terms of relocation to their country of association, or to stay on as citizens of the country they were geographically a part of. Although the exchange of these communities was facilitated at the bilateral level, their assimilation at the local levels of integration would come to be dependent upon the levels of acceptance extended towards these newly integrated or relocated groups by other local actors. However, the success of the LBA was grounded on the realisation of its outlined objectives, and therefore the necessity of supplementary efforts in reinforcing its bilateral measures at a local level was overlooked. There remains a marked absence of considerations of how local dynamics would react to or interact with such changes in its immediate socio-spatial contexts. As a result, local perceptions surrounding the transfer, as well as the subjects of the same have been variable.

Viewed against these suppositions and supported by local narratives, the provision of citizenship has not alleviated other problems faced by these communities. Although it has allowed these previously unrecognised sections of the population access to institutions of governance and instruments of administration, financial management, health care and education; one must recognise that access to the same channels had been previously negotiated by drawing upon extended linkages of familiarity or kinship to legitimise their claimed associations to the country. As a consequence, the advantages that they receive formally from the state today, has not made any significant impacts on other forms of deprivation encountered at the local level. Another aspect of their lives which is yet to change is the recognition of their status as owners of the land they reside on. Grievances

surrounding this persisting issue have been met with perfunctory assurances from local authorities claiming that the corresponding processes to address the same have been initiated and that the issuing of ownership papers will take time. This prevents the former enclave residents from not only being able to rightfully exercise claims of ownership over their land, but also lends to a growing sense of separation from other resident groups in the locale, despite their integration.

Narratives of differentiation persist at the local levels despite the formal integration of these spaces and its resident populations. The lack of assistance from the state after 2015, in the form of welfare, benefits and safeguards have significantly impeded these previously isolated communities from attaining parity with their surrounding locales. Even today, enclave residents frequently draw upon their identities as *'chhit bashinda'* (enclave resident) to emphasise the uncertainties and hardships they continue to face in their daily lives. Similarly, the identity of enclave residents as state citizens remains to be uniformly acknowledged at their respective local levels, and the extension of these recognitions is often contingent upon concerns of identity of these individuals or groups or their point of entry into the local space. Therefore, local residents still refer to these groups as *'chhit bashinda'*, while their settlements are still referred to as *'chhit'* or enclave in local parlance, with such apperceptions being embedded in local perceptions as a reinforcement of their historical existence in the local space due to the inability of the bilateral exchange at revising the same. The enclave residents also continue to associate with such identifications, often referring to their surrounding non-enclave localities as 'India', despite having been integrated into the state's territory. This in certain ways is suggestive of their continuing dislocation from the state, as well as the lack of state effort

to effectively integrate them into their immediate locale. As a consequence, there prevails an overall sense of dissociation from the state and institutions of governance both in terms of the geographical distance separating them from these pivots of administrative authority, as well as a notional distancing that has been shaped by the state's lack of local involvement following their exchange. Validation of claims to belonging at the local level (both within and outside of enclave borders) has also been differentiated on the basis of multiple considerations, most notably the religious identity of these groups, their point of entry into India, and even means of entry (whether illegal or official).

As stated in the preceding paragraphs, within the enclaves there exists a differentiated validation of claims over space and rights amongst the residents on the basis of their time of arrival to India. Newer entrants are often categorised as 'encroachers' by local populations and the older enclave residents and are more easily cast into the mould of the *otherised* Bangladeshi Muslim due to the apprehensions surrounding the circumstances of their arrival, or historical anxieties around their identities. Terms of difference-making based upon local perceptions and assumptions surrounding the identity and historical roots of former enclave residents are also frequently employed in segregating these communities within the locale. For instance, Hindus with Bangladeshi roots pre-dating 1971 are often referred to as *'Bhatiya'* or people of the soil, or as *'Dhakaiya'* or those who came from Dhaka. In the same way, Muslims from Bangladesh, who constitute a minority, are referred to as *'Miyah'* or *'Gnyada'*. These terms are locally considered to be pejorative, and they are used extensively to refer to the different local categorisations of enclave residents even today. These appellations are a product of the apprehensions that local populations have held over the enclave residents, which generally have been tied to

long-standing local anxieties about the 'other' (Banerjee et. al, 1999, p. 2549). Which, in this context was the 'Bangladeshi Muslim' specifically, and the unknown Bangladeshi in general. Bypassing their statelessness through informal channels of support and the local political leadership prior to 2015 enabled some enclave residents to subsist on more or less equal terms with the local population. However, despite such adaptations, the authority of claims exercised by the non-enclave locals with regard to access to resources and spaces, by virtue of their older identity as citizens; continue to persist and texture local dynamics of power and interactions with the enclave locals.

The relative location of the enclaves to local sites of conflict and the border with Bangladesh also had a significant impact on the levels of local acceptance secured by its inhabitants. Inhabitants of enclaves that were spatially proximate to other villages and to sites of local conflict enjoyed a greater level of assimilation than more deep-seated enclaves. In the case of the former, the participation of enclave residents in local protests against the establishment of the TBC and the ceding of the Dahagram-Angarpota enclave to Bangladesh emerged as a common local occurrence. Participation in local affairs functioned as a meter of assimilation and local acceptance, and was perceived dually in terms of its necessities and advantages to be derived by the participating groups of actors. On one hand, acceptance existed at the level of identifying these *individuals* (enclave residents) as 'citizens', due to their existence within the larger national space since Independence. On the other hand, enclave residents were mobilised by the local populations in protests against the transfer as a means to authenticate 'local' claims over these unsettled spaces. Their involvement was viewed to lend legitimacy to local assertions over these stateless spaces. Although local grievances were generally based on

considerations of the preservation of national territory and local rights over their immediate spatiality, the involvement of former enclave residents allowed such mobilisations to couch these nationalistic and particularistic considerations upon more locally apposite narratives concerning the plight of its stateless resident communities which they sought to protect as their own. Similarly, acceptance has also been through extension of their identity as occupants of national *territory*. In this case, acceptance flowed from the recognition of the *space* as a legitimate part of the larger national territory and therefore by extension, the recognition of its occupants as citizens. The recognition of these spaces and residents was based upon locally held notions of originary possession and a shared history, not accounting for their erstwhile unsettled status. Despite having extended the recognition of these spaces as national territory at the 'local' levels, the same did not extend to its occupants in many instances as can be discerned from accounts of discrimination encountered by the enclave residents in their daily, local interactions.

The level of integration certain enclaves enjoyed in terms of mobility across different spheres of local life and interactions did not, however, completely erase all markers of differentiation between local citizens and enclave residents. Enclave residents were often subjected to reprisals by the local populations by making reference to locally perceived distinctions that existed between them. These acts of discrimination and differentiation ranged from frivolous neighbourly banter to prejudicial statements directed at exposing their factitious identities as citizens. Such indiscretions were often carried out in public spaces such as markets, schools and also during elections when enclave residents with voter identification cards would be publicly called out as *chhit bashinda* (enclave

resident). But, since it was a common practice amongst enclave residents to procure identification as citizens through 'other' means, it suggests that this act of 'calling out' was not carried out to subject these populations to penalties or sanctions by the state, but as a means of asserting the local populations' prepollency over the enclave populations.

"They call us chhit er lok (enclave resident) even today. They know we are citizens now, but they have been here for longer, so they are above us. People still do not respect us as citizens. We are still enclave residents in their eyes. We never get fair prices for our crops or cattle because the buyers know that if we do not sell we will not eat. They are aware how dependent we are on their money." (Field Interview, 26.12.2018)

In certain locales, the social position of the erstwhile enclave inhabitants has remained unchanged. They claim that even before the implementation of the 2015 LBA, these populations were never isolated from their surrounding villages and households. It is probable that local consternations over the possible transfer of territory could have played a major role in the assimilation of these residents within their immediate locales. Additionally, the local identification of these erstwhile enclave inhabitants as Indians and their own vocalisations of their allegiance to the state may have contributed towards a swifter course of integration. Some of the older inhabitants of the former enclave of Sheupara claim that they have never been discriminated against for being 'stateless people'. According to these accounts they were always kept involved in the affairs of the village, would participate in local festivities, and were also a part of weddings, births, deaths and other social happenings at their immediate local level. In contrast, the newer residents have faced more barriers towards assimilating with their surroundings and its people. They state that they are still referred to as '*Bangladesh-er'* (those from

Bangladesh) in their interactions with the locals and in their search for employment in the subdivision. Unlike those from the former enclave spaces who had been in close contact with their surrounding households and families, these individuals find it more difficult to clarify their background to potential employers as well as to other individuals they interact with, because of local apprehensions surrounding the presence of Bangladeshi 'Muslims' in the region. The overlap of the national and the local becomes apparent through such interactions; whereby the adoption of national narratives of socio-cultural and political incongruence with the state manifested in the quotidian interactions between local inhabitants. The mirroring of national narratives surrounding the identity of the 'other' at the local level have mostly corresponded to the larger bilateral dynamics between India and Bangladesh. The impacts of bilateralism on local productions of identity and perceptions of socio-cultural identities of its constituent actors appear to be persistent, in terms of how it continues to shape the relationship between different groups.

Subsequently, the nature of interactions between enclave and non-enclave residents has also changed accordingly; ranging from exclusion, cooperation and integration. The localised implications of essentialist national narratives become visible in how the local constitutes its own rubrics of perception and interaction vis-à-vis what it categorised as the 'other' or 'outsider', fundamentally texturing the nature of local relationships between enclave and non-enclave residents. Correspondingly, these locally held perceptions and modes of engagements also impact upon the persistence or emergence of new conflicts between resident communities, which may potentially impact upon national and bilateral stabilities. The location of these sites close to the border only compounds such

perceptions of differences and incongruity of interests due to a more pronounced and often, visible manifestations of statist apperception[46]; although their local history of shared interactions and dependencies belie such separations.

Shifts in Land Ownership and Employment Patterns in *Chhit* Sheupara

The implementation of the 2015 LBA expedited the exchange of enclaves between India and Bangladesh, and the subsequent recognition of its residents as citizens of the state these individuals chose to remain in or relocate to. This entailed the registration of these new entrants in the electoral rolls, issuance of voter identification cards and Aadhar [47]cards. However, despite such steps having been taken in the direction of integrating them as citizens, the inhabitants of the former enclave of Sheupara are still devoid of official recognition of their status as owners of the land that they have lived on and cultivated, or acquired after relocating in the years leading up to and following 1971. The absence of any official papers[48] stating the validity of their proprietorship prevents the residents from mortgaging their land or even selling the same at the state's regulated price. The informality that characterised the transactions of these lands between external owners and those who settled down from Dahagram-Angarpota and other parts of Bangladesh in the years leading up to 1971 has led to many of the current inhabitants

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[46] The apparency of the state at the borders more visibly manifests during times of conflict, in the form of heightened security controls and regulations.

[47] Identification card issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), on behalf of the Government of India. The card functions as proof for single source offline/online identity verification across the country for its citizens.

[48] Claims of ownership of enclave land were validated by papers issued by the Princely State of Cooch Behar and held no ostensible value or validity after 1949 when it acceded to the Indian Union. However, up till the provisional recognition of rights to their land in January 2019, enclave residents used these

fearing that they might be evicted in probable outcome of their lands being seized for redistribution or reclaimed by the government for developmental purposes.

"We only got citizenship. What we need are papers to our land. Without that we are stuck here. The government can seize our land any day or it will go on like this" (Field Interview, 12.1.2019)

The unoccupied stretches of land within these former enclaves have either been claimed by large tea estates which derive a substantial proportion of its labour from the population of former enclave inhabitants. Most families within the former enclave are apprehensive about the government's ruling on the unsettled status of their land and therefore resort to offloading their assets to willing buyers. Given the continuing uncertainty surrounding the final status of their lands, these individuals have no other option but to offload their assets at prices significantly lower than the prices fixed by the state. The lack of proper identification of proprietorship of land prevents most from being able to sell at all, and therefore those who do manage a sale are usually short-handed in the valuation of their land, since prospective buyers are unwilling to take a gamble on what they considered as 'risky' and 'speculative' investments. The major local apprehensions surrounding the current ownership status is the government potentially staking a claim on their land, in the event of which these families stand to be displaced to facilitate the redistribution of such unregistered plots. Some also fear that the abortive sale of landholdings by some may prompt a trend amongst other families within the former enclave, which would bring down the overall valuation of their properties. The current undefined legal status of their ownership, deny its residents mobility outside of their current settings, by preventing

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documents as a proof of their ownership. Often, ownership rights were established through indications to past ties to the land, or by declaring it as ancestral possessions.

them from selling off their lands for reasons ranging from moving out in search of better employment opportunities, or mortgaging the same to procure money for medical treatments, weddings and for educating their children.

Agricultural labour, mostly owner-cultivation, constitutes the major source of income for the residents of these enclaves. Other professions such as masonry, carpentry, plumbing and electrical work are mostly concentrated around the more developed part of Mekhliganj. Agricultural employment varies from short-term to daily-basis employment in the larger tea-farms in the area to owner-cultivation at a subsistence level, with occasional surpluses kept aside for local markets. In recent years there has been a shift away from local agricultural work. Local responses suggest that the transition from owner cultivation was a result of the low wages associated with agricultural labour. For owner-cultivators, the risks associated with speculative prices of crops, the unpredictability of the monsoons and the quality and quantity of the harvest played a major role in facilitating this shift towards more lucrative and less uncertain means of livelihood. The lack of proper documentation of proprietorship of land[49] in the former enclaves has been a major issue of contention at the local level. The continuing uncertainty surrounding the final status of these lands compelled some to offload their properties at lower than standard rates due to the risks associated with the purchase of unregistered plots as stated earlier. The abortive sale of land attracted affluent externals that absorbed these small, individual landholdings into their large tea plantations. With the ownership of a significant proportion of the enclave land transferred to a few non-

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[49] Although the local enclave residents received documents recognizing their ownership status in January 2019, these documents were not *pro forma*, but in the form of a provisional certification.

residents, most enclave residents currently find themselves employed as pickers in the local tea estates, or as seasonal labourers on land which they have either leased out or sold off. In certain locales, unequal beneficiary schemes have also come into existence, such as '*Aadha Chaash*'[50] and '*Bondok*'[51], filling the vacuities left by the absence of state-welfare schemes at the local level for the former enclave residents.

"The land within the enclave is owned by people from outside. They are rich people. They delight in all the returns that are derived from the land. These returns are produced by the using the hard work of the locals" (Field Interview, 28.6.2018)

The newer generations have gradually begun to move away from the enclaves in search of more steady forms of employment. The male youth population have been able secure employment in the states of Kerala, Karnataka and Rajasthan as construction labourers and security guards, while some are auto-mobile and *toto* drivers in nearby cities. The higher wages and the regularity in income have been major factors in this shift of labour away from the enclaves. The inability to fill the gap left by the outflow of labour has resulted in cultivation steadily declining as a major form of employment and subsistence in the enclaves. This has also resulted in a rise in the frequency with which land is being sold off to non-residents. Some enclave residents have resorted to selling their land to the local government for the purpose of establishing community spaces and developmental

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[50] Externally funded cultivation scheme where a sponsor provides the land owner with the necessary requirements for cultivating a particular crop during any of the four crop seasons in return for half of the total yield. In certain cases, due to defaulting on the delivery of the owed share, penalties are owed to the sponsor in the form of a higher percentage of the total yield or a monetary fine.

[51] Form of mortgaging where the landowner leases out either a part or in entirety their land to another party in exchange for a certain amount of money that has to be repaid with interest after a specified period of time. In certain cases, the unfair interest rates often result in the seizure of land or its use beyond the specified period as denoted in the contract.

projects such as greenhouses, solar panels and irrigation pumps. The compensation received is in the form of employment during the construction process, at times extending to hiring them in the maintenance and upkeep of these spaces and facilities as caretakers. With these hindrances to their financial mobility, families living within these newly integrated spaces are to some extent still confined to their immediate surroundings.

Polarised Integration of the Local

A majority of the enclave population and that of the surrounding villages belong to the *Khotriyo* caste, enumerated by the Indian state under the category of Scheduled Castes[52]. Inhabitants within and across different enclaves in the region belong to the same caste group, which has lent itself to the emergence of a sense of uniformity and cohesion at the local level, undercutting their other separations (most notably, of enclave and non-enclave identities). Their present-day concerns and the uncertain circumstances of their lives within the enclaves were often juxtaposed against the sense of pride these individuals hold in their identity as *Khotriyos*; given the association of its people with the royal family and the Princely State of Cooch Behar.

"During my grandfather's time, enclave inhabitants used to live with more respect. We used to stay on the King's land. We were different from our surrounding localities. But after Independence people stopped giving us that respect. We could no longer hold on to it ourselves, as the King gave us to India. We were not always enclave inhabitants. Before, this land was ours." (Field Interview, 29.10.2018)

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[52] Protected category of communities under the Indian government, and comprises some of the most socially and economically disadvantaged low-caste groups in the country.

Local associations and invocations with these identities has varied in accordance to the contexts of their usage, where their caste identity is often used to validate their claims over residence on Indian soil by bringing forth its historical association with the erstwhile Koch kingdom and its existence as a part of India, notwithstanding its status as a Princely State. These narratives were based upon the historical association of their caste identity with the geographical space they occupy now as well as on the past mobilities in and out of these spaces before the establishment of the border; by stating connections through recollections and memories of travel to and from these enclaves before the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. For the newer entrants, the caste identity has often mitigated discrimination by the original inhabitants, by drawing upon the congruity of their socio-cultural identities and shared cultural histories. Having the same caste identity as those of the original inhabitants and some of the older residents within the enclaves and in the surrounding villages has enabled the newer entrants to assimilate, either through associations of marriage or through invoking aforementioned narratives of similarity[53].

There exists a sense of uniformity derived from similarities in socio-cultural traditions and religious practices as a number of accounts derived from the interactions at the field

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[53] Often, former enclave residents on the Indian side would revert back to old identities of association with the erstwhile Princely State of Cooch Behar. Even though they existed as enclaves before the integration of the Princely State into the Indian Union, residents recall how they still lived with some form of recognition, as subjects; even though it did not extend to the provision of citizenship. Enclave residents in their interactions, would often fall back on their identity as *Rajbongshi*, a term used to refer to the Koch people in the latter half of the 1800s – an outcome of their contact with caste Hindus, and their efforts to assert their direct linkage with the Princely class or *raja'r bongsho*, carried out under their *Kshatriyaisation* led by Panchanan Barman in Bengal. These differences are also asserted through linguistic expression in Kamtapuri, or the Rajbongshi language, which shares its vocabulary with Bengali and Assamese and to a lesser extent with Nepali and Maithili. Individuals often fell back on their identity to assert their position of dignity under the erstwhile Princely State, which was later revoked through the imposition of statelessness upon its accession to the Indian Union.

sites attest to the prevalence of a sense of solidarity and community along caste lines despite other conflicts of interest. Congruence in their shared religious identities strengthened their embedding in the locale, as well. Participant accounts frequently narrated how the distribution of enclave socialities reflected the dominant, nationalistic narratives surrounding the border in the years leading up to the Liberation War of 1971, mostly based upon local perceptions of socio-cultural incongruity between the two major regional religious groupings of Hindu and Muslim. Therefore it can be asserted that the local conflicts related to the border between India and what was previously East Pakistan, although manifesting around local concerns of loss of land and social anxieties, they came to be undergirded by the dominant, statist narratives underlying the bilateral conflicts between India and Pakistan over regional territories. With the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state, inter-state perceptions underwent a steady shift as the demarcation of the border assumed importance as one of the primary focuses of its bilateral ties with India. For the same, a resolution of the enclave issue was considered necessary. These spaces which were recognised as national territory in 2015 although isolated from their respective states' administrative reach, were not distinct from the border's constitutive and operative dynamics manifesting in the form of local dynamisms and relations between its component actors. Subsequently, these spaces even after their exchange, exhibit certain tendencies which separates them from the larger spatiality of the locale which they now, 'officially' constitute a part of. In turn, constituting a 'local' unto themselves, each unique in terms of their geographical location which is impacted upon by their particular historical trajectories, and the manner in which they interact with their adjoining locales and the larger national purview as embodied by the state and its

various sub-national and local disaggregations of sovereign authority. In its localised manifestations, the fracturing of the enclave locale is visible in the manner in which the individuated community identities of the new settlements within enclave territories were constituted. These clusters, as mentioned in preceding sub-sections, established their own positionality at the local level, vis-à-vis interactions with non-enclave locals and therefore stood separable from other similar units.

It was the bilateral integration of enclaves by the state which re-established the demographic category of the enclave dweller or '*chhit bashinda*' at the local level. This identity had previously been masked by the extension of citizenship, informally through local support channels to the enclave residents, facilitating access to state welfare, institutions and public spaces prior to their integration as mentioned earlier. Through its rehabilitative measures, the state delimited beneficiary categories for its welfare which only included the enclave residents as rightful recipients. Integration of enclave residents within formal categorisations of belonging and interactions consolidated the enclave identity, in the process highlighting their marginalisation as the marker for their qualification as beneficiaries. As an outcome, the state brought forth disparities within a locale which had endured and cooperatively bypassed the limitations of existence within a highly contentious and regulated border space, interspersed with different conditions of access and exclusion. The distribution of resources by the state emerges as a critical point of engagement with conflicts arising from the relative scales of local deprivation. The distribution of welfare to the newly integrated citizens led to the emergence of new forms of inequalities at the local level. The state's identification of enclave residents as beneficiaries to its welfare cemented differentiations within the local milieu on the basis

of this identity. Differentiations between enclave and non-enclave locals had been significantly offset by the religious homogenisation of the enclave space through forced displacements and the consequent development of interdependences between the resultant homogenised configurations of local demography. These markers of differentiation were further weakened through the transactional exchange of benefits and support amongst the enclave and non-enclave locals as has been elucidated in the preceding sections.

Despite differences in positions of both enclave and non-enclave locals in the local milieu, there existed a shared sense of deprivation which constituted the foundations of cooperative engagement. These deprivations were rooted in the specificities of the experiences of enclave and non-enclave locals in navigating the challenges of engaging with the absence and evident manifestation of the state, respectively, albeit within shared circumstances of marginality and liminality. For the former, it originated from an absence of formal validation to their citizenship claims, while the grievances of the non-enclave locals were based on the inability of the state to preserve what they considered national territory (read, cross-border enclaves, specifically Dahagram-Angarpota) from exchange. Despite distinctions in their underlying intentions, these local claims reflected similar demands – the recognition of these stateless spaces and its people – albeit through different means. The enclave locals prioritised their recognition as citizens as a prelude to the enclaves' integration into national territory. On the other hand, the non-enclave locals emphasised upon territorial integration as a means to assimilating its inhabitants. Successively, the enclave locals' identities have encountered shifts in response to such local transformations. Initially, they identify as inhabitants of their immediate locale,

cementing their position through interactions with non-enclave locals and transferred identifications of local citizenship. These processes of cooperation were constituted out of a common need to bypass both common and specific grievances arising out of a common sense of deprivation by the state, although based on different reasons. Subsequent to their integration, the identity of an enclave inhabitant became more pronounced and frequently asserted in an effort to qualify for the states' welfare schemes.

The integrative element in local relations in the context of this issue had been the lack of state involvement in resolving the undetermined status of the enclaves. The provision of citizenship was considered by enclave residents as the solution to their longstanding issues. However, recurrent failures at resolving the issue at a bilateral level, presented the non-enclave locals the prospect to fill in for the state. Their citizenship allowed them to exercise control over resources and access to institutions which the enclave locals were denied. Prior to their integration by the state, grievances at the local level were uniform across enclave and non-enclave spaces – concerning the official recognition of these spaces and its people. At the local level, these demands were viewed as the alteration of a *de facto* reality through *de jure* recognition. However, the official recognition of these spaces as national territory and its inhabitants as citizens, by the state transformed prevalent social dynamics of interactions and interdependence. Local acknowledgement for the need for citizenship as a means towards integration was based on an assumption that subsequent steps would not alter prevalent socio-political dynamics at the local level. These discernments were based upon the experiences drawn at the local level with regards to the informal extension of rights and entitlements of citizenship to the enclave residents. As elucidated in this section, the extension of comparable benefits of

citizenship did not result in a complete dissolution of inequalities between the enclave locals and their non-enclave counterparts. The disruption of local hierarchies through the state's intervention upturned local unanimity based on a common demand for citizenship as the enclave inhabitants' began to reassert their identity of 'statelessness' to qualify as beneficiaries under the state's rehabilitation scheme. The elimination of one component of these local articulations of dependence, that is, of the enclave populations on the non-enclave locals, for welfare, securities and validations therefore, significantly disempowered their local hegemony. The state's dwindling involvement in a rehabilitative capacity has only compounded the impact of the receding protective armature of local, social capital networks. However, this recession is in no manner absolute. With the insertion of the state, more important concerns such as issues surrounding citizenship and ownership rights over land are now directed through formal, institutional channels. Local networks of support are still operative, although diminished in their scope of engagement, dealing with more interpersonal or private concerns, and in arbitrating conflicts between individuals and families.

Indeterminate National and the New Local

The primacy of national narratives over local realities in social discursive productions is guided by the primacy with which states seek to address objectives of national interest, and in doing so colours the representation of the issue in the public sphere of its engagement. In national representations, the range of bilateral concerns surrounding the enclaves was understood to be based on the overarching issues of *territory* transfer, and the exchange of ***populations*** – two determinants that are fundamental to the construction and preservation of the idea of the state (Fowler &

Bunck, 1996). The resolution of the bilateral dispute was based on an identification that was commensurate with the states' national interests, with regard to the management of its territory and population. Respectively, it prioritised the transfer of territories and the provision of citizenship as the foremost instruments of resolution, at the bilateral and national levels respectively. However, such an engagement obscured the presence of other critical contestations in these spaces. The presence of local conflicts surrounding the enclave issue that were not captured within its bilateral suppositions; point towards a lack of engagement with the localised impacts of this on-going dispute and its discernible impacts. By associating the enclave dispute with externalities not necessarily contributing to local engagement, its construction at the national and bilateral levels represented the issue as one concerning only a revised acknowledgement of the status of national claims made over these spaces. This interlinking of the enclave issue with these aforementioned themes also had significant impacts on the local construal of the issue, which was the space in which the impacts of their resultant bilateral exchanges manifested.

"We did not want the enclaves to be exchanged. We wanted a corridor that would connect us with India. Also if the banks of the river could be leveed then a lot of our worries would have disappeared. Exchanging enclaves did not help India in any way. Bangladesh got so much land just like that." (Field Interview, 4.1.2019)

Opinions at the local level surrounding the transfer of enclaves have differed amongst its multiple replications within and across the same spatiality. For instance, even at the local level, opinions surrounding the LBA have differed amongst those residing in the enclaves, communities from the surrounding non-enclave localities and other regional actors from neighbouring Indian states. Consequently, the understanding of a particular

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issue within the local space of its operation and its construals beyond it differ significantly since the national narratives constitute the basis on which interpretations and actions are centred. Additionally, the state in its lack of engagement with these varied local articulations disclaims the need to view an issue as intricately linked to the contingencies of its existence, related to its entrenchment within specific socio-spatial realities. Similarly, the national construal of the enclave issue was not representative of the multiplicity of sentiments across and within local communities. Political identities and allegiances within the former enclave and its surrounding villages appeared to be aligned with local perceptions surrounding the key actors involved in the political process leading up to the exchange of the enclaves. These narratives clearly delineate individuals and organisations along a binarised interpretation of motivations and incentives; distinguishing between and attributing values to those who were opposed to the transfer and those who were not. Locally, the transfer of enclaves has been viewed as a loss of national territory, and therefore there prevails a sense of irreparable loss amongst its resident communities. The proximity of the study sites to the former enclave of Dahagram-Angarpota may be one of the reasons behind local perceptions surrounding the resolution process reflecting sentiments of forfeiture because of the local history of conflict surrounding its transfer to Bangladesh[54].

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[54] There is also a common perception held by the inhabitants of the Kuchlibari village regarding the Indian government being 'open-handed' (*dayalu*) with its territory. The loss of Dahagram-Angarpota to Bangladesh resonates loudly within local grievances surrounding the official resolution process that culminated in the exchange of the enclaves in 2015. One of the reasons for the same could be the extent of local involvement in the protests surrounding the establishment of the TBC and the transfer of Dahagram-Angarpota. The local perceptions surrounding the transfer of Dahagram-Angarpota to Bangladesh appear to be contained within larger narratives of loss, where local testimonies appeared to be embedded in a sense of nostalgia from a time when Dahagram-Angarpota still existed like the other Bangladeshi enclaves within India, where accessibility was shared with surrounding villages.

Local perceptions of what constitutes the national can be characterised as indeterminate and remains primarily based around which level of governance constitutes the source of potential redressal for their grievances. It was observed that local perceptions of the national did not rest on a singular identification, but on interchangeable references to institutions of state governance as well as the centre. In contrast, the local administration and its associated institutions were viewed as much more receptive to their demands and grievances, and a sense of 'closeness' to the same as well as familiarity with individuals who hold local office have made these avenues more accessible than their counterparts at the levels of the state and the national administrations. Similarly, the attribution of responsibility and accountability by the locals to the government at different levels kept shifting in accordance with the context of different issues. For the grievances tied to the persistent issues present in these former enclaves, such as the absence of official authorisation of land ownership, their first point of contact is the local administration. Accounts drawn from the inhabitants of these erstwhile enclaves state that the reasons behind the persistence of such issues is usually detailed by the local governance as a state or centre issue which is beyond their jurisdictional purview, thereby ridding themselves of any accountability or answerability for the same.

"There has been no communication regarding the status of our lands. We have protested at the District Magistrate's office. We even went on a hunger strike for 20 days. Then they (local officials) came to talk to us and asked us to stop. But later they say the same thing. They tell us it is not in their hands." (Field Interview, 13.11.2018)

The relationship between these populations and the central and state governments appears devoid of any formal channels of communication or dialogue. There exists an overall

sense of dissociation from these authorities both in terms of the geographical distance separating them from these pivots of administration and governance, and also a notional distancing that has been shaped by the prevalent inability to reach these centres. Accounts detailing failed attempts at mobilisation in Kolkata to protest for their demands, delegations to important offices not being received, have etched a sense of resignation in the way these individuals speak about the governance at this level, drawing no particular distinction between the state and central governments and viewing them as inaccessible. Understandings of the 'national' were therefore used by the respondents interchangeably to allude to changing contexts of their usage while discussing their efforts to address their grievances at the level of the states and the centre. Most respondents used the term in discussion to make reference to the ruling party in power and not any imperceptible abstractions of power operating through institutions of administration at these levels. Contrastingly, the idea of the 'local' remained static in its usage such it was predominantly employed in reference to the immediate locale space and at times, or the the common issues faced by its residents. Identifications of authority at this level, unlike perceptions of state or central power, were based on individual identifications primarily and then their political affiliations. This shifting of answerability from one level of governance to another, their avoidance to engage with stronger agglomerations of political power, structures local perceptions of governance in general, since these avenues constitute their only points of contact with state power. For the same reason, reliance on individuals has grown much stronger in contrast to what is extended towards political parties and organisations, leading to the emergence of dominant, local power elites.

Their narratives often invoked the usage of the ambiguous and mutable category of the '*shorkar*' (government) in situating the source of their grievances. This category, though frequently used by the locals however, is not defined by them. The term *'shorkar'* in its variable usage was used to refer to individual officials at the local level, District Magistrates and also officials from the Block Development Office, whereas in relation to the decisions arrived at bilaterally they refer to the Union government *(kendriyo shorkar)*. These allusions shift in between these two understandings of 'government' and 'governance' along local and national lines depending on the issue under discussion. In terms of response to local concerns surrounding the establishment of the TBC or any other international decision it is primarily the central government that is referred to with no reference to any individual actor. Conversely, in the management of local grievances arising out of what are considered centrally orchestrated decisions, the obligation for their extenuation is shifted to the local government; especially individuals that have been identified as key players in the local administration.

At the local level, the non-enclave localities and their populations have viewed the transfer of enclaves to Bangladesh as a loss of national territory. There prevails a sense of grievance amongst those who have experienced loss or dispossession as a direct consequence of the LBA's implementation. For the enclave communities it signified a shift from the past reality of unclassifiable existences, identifications and seclusion. Despite the probable circumstances of change and relocation that the LBA prompted at the local level for the former enclave communities, and with it associated disruptions and displacements from their embedded mores, traditions and life-processes, it was viewed as

having assuaged complications with regard to issues of identity[55] and mobility and other uncertainties that characterised their stateless lives. As for the non-enclave localities, many lost significant portions of their land due to the fencing of the previously un-demarcated sections of the border. Alongside this, the regulation of their movements and prior entitlements of access to certain spaces now came to be controlled by the establishment of a visible border replete with fences, barbed wire and more stringent regulatory mechanisms. Expressions of disapproval against the resolution process at the local level (especially non-enclave local spaces) interpret the resolution process as an enforced acceptance of its outcomes.

"Our government is very compassionate. They gave more land away than they received." (Field Interview, 15.10.2018)

The absence of a singular notion of a most favourable solution in the context of the enclave issue points towards the multiplicity and complexity of issues and concerns facing the local populations that stood to be directly affected by the exchange; an aspect that had been enveloped fully by the national narrative. Even so, other grievances persisted and continue to do so with regard to issues left the bilateral resolution clearly left unaddressed. The persistence of problems and the emergence of new issues in and around the enclaves subsequent to their exchange can be understood as a consequence of the conflicting opinions surrounding the issue at the 'local' and 'national' levels. The discrepancy can be viewed in the context of the state's understanding of these localised conflicts and issues surrounding the exchange, as separable from the localised, socio-

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[55] See M. Weiner (1978), *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*, for a detailed understanding of the operation of identity in multi-ethnic societies dealing with unmitigated cross-border migration.

political machinations of the enclave dispute. Post integration, enclave residents are confronted with the challenge of assuming their role as citizens within a larger national space, whose policies (or lack thereof) has not facilitated this transition for them, at the local and national levels.

Local respondents frequently avoided topics surrounding the impacts of the bilateral enclave transfer and discussions regarding this underlying theme of inquiry were mainly carried out in the context of local grievances surrounding the critical points of India-Bangladesh relations and its localised impacts; viz.; the 1971 War of Liberation, establishment of the TBC and the exchange of enclaves under the LBA of 2015. There was a common narrative amongst respondents suggestive of the transfer being a consolatory yielding of territory to Bangladesh by India. However, the responses were primarily based on the present local discontents surrounding the transfer of Dahagram-Angrarpota to Bangladesh. This issue still persists locally as a prickly memory, that has in ways impacted upon how these communities view the state, and more particularly the political parties and leaders at the Central and State levels who were instrumental in expediting the exchange. At the same time, these reproaches have been given new life by the tussles emerging between the Centre and the state of West Bengal[56], leading to the resurfacing of refurbished narratives surrounding the transfer of the enclaves and local

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[56] The majority party at the helm of the West Bengal State Government (Trinamool Congress) and its leader and Chief Minister of State, Mamatha Banerjee, stands as one of the last bulwarks against the majoritarian hold of the Central Government of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the remaining states of the Indian Union. The state Assembly polls in 2021, laid bare the political rivalries between the two parties in a competitive race, which engaged with issues of the India-Bangladesh border and the status of its borderland residents. The BJP eventually lost the state elections, in one of its largest electoral defeats after having assumed power at the Centre.

discontents around some of its key incidents in active political campaigns for the Legislative Assembly elections concluded in 2021[57].

Participant narratives suggest that the enclave residents viewed the exchange as a resolution of their unsettled territorial status and identity. Conversely, spaces located away from the border but within states directly affected by the transfer, viewed the exchange as a publicly unendorsed transfer of territory to another state. These two narratives can be traced back to two contrasting opinions surrounding the issue; one from the centre and the other from the local and regional actor-scape. Both views filtered through and gained traction at these distinct local levels, and have had impacts on the ways in which the issue has been perceived, lobbied for or against, and dealt with at the formal, institutional and the informal levels. In addition, signifying the fracturing of the unchanging perception of the local engaged with by the state, into multiple strands, each informed by the experiences and interactions of its inhabitants with the larger processes of change experienced by them in its varying capacities and forms. This may be considered as an indication that the local, in the context of the India-Bangladesh border enclaves, did not constitute its perception of the dispute in isolation, but in tandem with the larger bilateral narrative surrounding the transfer and its perceptions/acceptance vis-à-vis their own socio-spatial positionalities. The overall geographical history of the enclaves, their proximity to the international border and other adjacent local sites of contestation, and their underlying acuities of the resolution of their 'stateless' condition

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[57] The BJP expedited the suspended bilateral agreement leading to the exchange after assuming power after winning an undisputed majority in the 2014 parliamentary elections. The failings of the government to manage the border, and following through with the rehabilitation and resettlement of the former enclave populations were frequently used as points of discussion in local gatherings of the TMC, according to local respondents, contacted telephonically during the period of campaigns.

as a prerequisite for furthering the India-Bangladesh bilateral relationship have all been instrumental in defining the construction of a 'new local' that is altered from other perceptions which may be considered as operating at the same level. What needs to be identified in these two divergent perspectives is the absence of any considerations beyond the themes outlined by the national interpretation. Further, such views were mostly concentrated in non-enclave spaces that were not affected by the transfer. This pattern is indicative of the manner in which national interpretations impacts the assessment of issues at varying levels of disaggregation, and the formation of support and/or opposition for certain policies. Moreover, such replications point towards the impact of essentialised national perusals of issues and disputes at local sites of conflict.

Local Adaptations to Bilateralism

The homogenisation of border spaces, in terms of territorial and demographic uniformity, has been a precondition towards its management by the state. Often, the state relies on integrative measures at varying intensities, as a means of conferring the moral and constitutional attributes of territoriality or citizenship over contested territories or communities (Cons, 2012). Given the salience of borders as the limits to state sovereignty, integration with regards to contested territories and populations assumes a more regulatory and reformist character. Measures adopted towards this end presuppose the centrality of the state as the foremost facilitator of assimilation of spaces and peoples into its fold, a view that may not often represent ground realities (Raffestin, 2012). As a result, integration is necessitated on the predication that the state is the foremost organiser

of social and economic relations, whereas 'statelessness' is equated with a lack of social, economic and political order and organisation.

Policies constituted around such interpretations fail to account for local dynamics of interactions and identifications amongst people or spaces isolated by the state's qualifications of affiliation. The imposition of the states' schema of citizenship and territoriality through integration disrupts pre-existing processes of identification and assimilation operating informally at the local level. The salience of the state's encompassing authority delegitimises local or informal actors who facilitated the distribution of rights, identifications and welfare in its absence. State intervention circumvents local social capital networks and prevailing dependencies and associations, by inserting itself as the legitimate mediator of such claims. By transposing a system detached from the realities of existing interdependences between un-integrated spaces and communities, the state upends the assimilation already established by local processes. The local milieu presented in this study, structured by the experiences of a community in isolation, and their interactions with the state through its citizens, provides critical insights on enclaves and other unclassifiable territorial categories on the basis of their position within the larger national space. The inclusion of the local perspective into existing frameworks prompts an engagement with the intrinsic agency of a community to make attempts towards overcoming its circumstantial challenges. Approaches towards resolution of territorial incongruences often tend to view the space as dissociated from the relationships and interactions that constitute the same and instead base such steps on an inert conceptualisation of territory as primarily a physical space, a carrier of settlements. But as this study's deep focus into local machinations within a conflict

setting has brought forth; measures towards this end must account for the fact that human interactions, unlike territories, are not adjustable to the rationalisations of state policy towards territorial and social reorganisation.

The state focused exclusively on the enclaves as the subject of integration into the national fold. It viewed the enclaves as being dissociated from the larger state by virtue of their statelessness. Statist perceptions fell short of considering the presence of other networks of support, in the absence of the state. These local networks functioned similarly to the state, in their monopolisation over both tangible and intangible resources. Despite the fact that these processes were being performed by local, non-state actors, the state emphasised upon a strategy of integration which sought to emphasise upon the deprivations of these previously stateless communities. Such a measure failed to account for the manner in which the same had been bypassed to establish a relational dynamic similar to that of the relationship between the state and the citizen, at the local level. In this context, the non-enclave locals extended the benefits of citizenship to the enclave inhabitant. The exercise of this transferred citizenship was limited to participation in local affairs and was viewed by the enclave inhabitants as their rightful due, having been affectively linked to their country of residence due to socio-cultural similarities and shared historical experiences, despite their statelessness.

Since the resolution of the issue at a bilateral level and the implementation of the Land Boundary Agreement which facilitated the enclaves' exchange, the enclave residents have shifted from being beneficiaries of local, informal support to state welfare. The reassertion of the enclave identity to qualify for state welfare created gulfs between

previously co-existent communities, has led to the disintegration of prevalent processes of interdependence. The exchange of the India-Bangladesh border enclaves therefore was devoid of estimations of how the same would impact upon existent conflicts as well as lead to the emergence of new ones at the local level of the implementation of its constitutive procedures. Despite the absence of state-centric strategic and security issues, conflicts surrounding the enclaves of India and Bangladesh and their subsequent transfer in 2015 featured as an important issue in their bilateral relationship.

Estimations regarding the same at the respective levels of governance of the two countries were also mismatched. In India, narratives signifying loss of national territory were frequently lobbied by those opposed to the transfer. At the local level, these narratives trickled down to rouse the resident populations against the transfer, by projecting it as a consolatory yielding of territory to another state. For Bangladesh, the resolution process, before its culmination in 2015, was for the most part an exercise in perseverance, as they saw any progress towards a settlement overturned on multiple occasions by India's inability to secure a Parliamentary majority in support for the same. The final resolution was dependent upon the convergence of their individual interest to allow for a common point of intervention to resolve an outstanding territorial dispute.

The enclave issue, in a lot of senses, was a localised issue in terms of its scope of operation and impacts. The problems faced by the residents of these spaces, with regard to their lack of access to state welfare, utilities and safeguards and an absence of rights and recognition from the state as citizens, were in fact problems that were rooted in that very specific socio-spatial context. The viewing of a local issue from a national

perspective obscured the presence of other conflicts within these spaces, and also in the dynamics of their interactions with their surrounding localities, its inhabitants, and the larger national space; concerns that were not commensurate with the 'national' reading of the enclave issue. The association of the enclave narratives with issues such as territorial sovereignty, citizenship and the rational organisation of the international border modulated its interpretation and management at the national and bilateral levels. For the former, the exchange was viewed as a resolution of their unsettled territorial status and their official recognition as citizens of either their country of residence or association, whichever they chose to join. This perspective may be attributed to the fact that these steps significantly alleviated the uncertainty surrounding their lives and livelihood. For the surrounding localities and even for spaces situated away from the border and in other states, the transfer carried two contrasting narratives at the local level as mentioned in previous sections. These two narratives can be attributed to two antithetical opinions surrounding the issue, one representative of the view of the ruling government at the Centre which lobbied for the move, and the other of the political and public factions which opposed it. The representation of national interests, associated with the functions of its pursuit and preservation by the Central Government, can therefore be clearly separated from 'local' or even 'provincial' interests; in conformity with the subjectivist critiques of national interest articulation.

Locally, the transfer of enclaves has been viewed as a loss of national territory, and therefore there prevails a sense of injury amongst those who have experienced loss or dispossession, whether in terms of material losses of land and property or more innate forfeitures, such as one's sense of situatedness and belonging to a particular space.

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Iterations of disapproval against the resolution process at the local level came to represent the exchange as an enforced acceptance of its outcomes. However, within the enclaves the transfer is viewed as having eased complications with regard to their identity and mobility. That being said, the absence of a singular notion of a most favourable solution in the context of the enclaves' exchange alludes to the multiplicity and complex nature of issues and concerns facing the local populations that stood to be directly affected by the exchange; an aspect that had been enveloped by the national narrative which hinged on territoriality and citizenship. Even so, other grievances persisted and continue to do so with regard to the issues that were left unaddressed by the LBA as has been discussed in the preceding sections. While the state has established itself as the primary source of community identification and affiliation, there operates informally at the local level various other forms of belonging which predates establishment of international borders and also circumvents the rigid norms of inclusion and exclusion instituted by the state. Therefore, in a way the local through its own adaptation and modification of formal conditionalities to its existence, not only strives to assert its agency vis-à-vis the state but also acts as important stakeholder in state's territorialising and governing projects (Jones, 2012), albeit the time one has to consider for subversions to state power might take to manifest at its outer reaches or zones of conflict. Therefore, in order to unpack the implications of imposition of the state's qualificatory schemes of belonging, one must account for the impacts of the same on the interactions and perceptions with the different framings of territory and citizenship established as such through a wide and diverse spectrum of local interactions (Brambilla, 2015).

Conclusion

As becomes evident from the study's elucidation of local grievances surrounding the transfer in these enclaved locales, its locally held perceptions were significantly impacted upon by national and state narratives opposed to or in favour of the exchange; giving these varied strands of discontent a definite shape and at times, prompting their materialisation as local conflicts. The commingling of discordant opinions arising out of specific contexts of local milieus with national and state narratives brought varied perceptions under broad-stroke assertions either in support of or opposition to the bilateral exchange. These homogenised narratives of discontent continue to operate in these local spaces even today, giving shape to present-day local grievances between local actors and the state. Political allegiances at the local level appear to be drawn upon residents' perceptions regarding the intrinsic worth of the exchange as a solution, and extended to key political actors and their affiliate parties who mirror their sentiments. Although such perceptions delineate individuals, political groups and decisions along a binarised interpretation of motivations and incentives; distinguishing between and attributing values to those who were opposed to the transfer and those who were not, such essentialised apperceptions are only perceptible in the absence of the local from these considerations. The statist representation of the enclave dispute limited public engagement on the issues of territory and sovereignty, which also constituted the grounds upon which local political contestations played out. The predominance of such apperceptions, and their inescapability due to the state's exclusive control over the categorisation of such conflicts, has contributed both to the suppression of the individual locales constituting the larger conflict spatiality and their political and perceptual

homogenisation. Through its power, the state and its categorisations limit the perceptive boundaries of any issue, space or identity to the binaries it defines it by, existing chiefly in the logics of qualification and elimination. At this juncture, the study critically interjects to engage with such political, social and cultural categorisations from the specificities of their manifest, local productions. By introducing the local as a referent, their lived experiences and quotidian perceptions formed through interactions with the state slowly begin to come forth, especially when one analyses the divergences in their responses towards its power (Balibar 1998, 1999). This approach brings forth these lost avenues of engagement with an issue, in the past or in more contemporary settings, as the discrepancies in their categorisations begin to emerge at the local levels as manifest conflicts or more latent undertows. This should not be interpreted as an alarmist declaration for pronounced control, but to view the local as a mutable and diffuse category necessitating particularistic engagement with its constitutive issues and dynamics.

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Chapter 4

Disruptions, Adaptations, Continuities and the Impacts of Bilateralism: A Case Study of Local Contestations in Dahagram-Angarpota, Bangladesh

Understanding Borderland Resilience

The concept of resilience has been employed in its polyvalent capacity across different disciplines and paradigms. Its interdisciplinary usages have spanned its application across the domains of both the physical and social sciences. Although the context of its usage has mostly determined the applicable functions of the concept, certain core assumptions about its central meaning however remain unchanged. The study proposes the usage of a framework of resilience through which the processes and functions of local adaptive capacities at the borderlands can be studied. In the context of this research, the term signifies the adaptability of the borderland local in the face of contemporaneous changes brought about as a consequence of its interactions of state power. The idea of adaptability has been derived from the conditions that the four pronged model of resilience responds to (Woods, 2015). These circumstances include a foray into the configuration of particular socialities that respond to disruptions more effectively than others, all the while reconfiguring its own internal machinations to limit fallouts to its exposure to disruptive recursions. In addition, the idea of resilience is also

viewed against the spontaneity of its emergence and its sustainability towards maintaining such adaptive capacities.

Applying the concept of resilience to the understanding of borderland processes permits a critical insight into the underlying machinations contributing to its dynamism. With the variegation of state bordering practices at its limits, the resistance against its measures at the local level has frequently been presented as disruptive. The key reason behind the same could be the partial and specific accounting of violent subnational conflicts, illegal immigration, smuggling, trafficking as the most prevalent forms of such 'disruptions'. However, the application of the conceptual framework of resilience to the analysis of such occurrences opens up our perspective to the diversity of phenomenon and processes that contribute towards its emergence at the local level. This takes into account local borderland culture, politics, economics and its interactions with the state at this level (Brunet-Jailly, 2005). The study extends this understanding to encompass the cross-border implications of local conflicts, on local communities and on the bilateral relations between states (Yuval-Davis et al. 2019, p. 163). Therefore, the framework has been duly extended to understand the history and cultural systems on both sides of the India-Bangladesh border to analyse the localised impacts of a bilateral resolution. In the context of this study, the sites have been kept confined to the enclaves and their surrounding locales, to trace the points of convergence and the fundamental differences that exist in their own specific adaptive capabilities. These divergences are viewed as being rooted in the circumstances of their existence, which in this case, presented both common and specific challenges to navigate through, for the enclave and non-enclave locals. Subsequently, the nature of local resilience captured by the study also accounts for

processes that were collaborative, derivative and even conflicting that emerged between different sets of actors at the local level.

The relative position of the border to the states it separates, positions its adjacent borderlands as critical sites for studying the impact of bilateral policies initiated in managing its resident populations and guiding the functioning of its authority in these spaces. In the context of this study, the history and geographical location of the enclaves positioned its resident communities on the interstices between two distinctive understandings of territoriality, sovereignty and belonging, as embodied by the perceptual and procedural machinations of their respective national interests. Their adaptations, although mostly prompted by their liminal existence and in responding to the heightened presence of state power at the borders, were also at times impacted upon by more emotive and perceptive bearings.

Local affective perceptions were also impacted upon by the prevalent bilateral dynamics between the two countries. An exploration into the different phases of the bilateral agreement between India and Bangladesh reveals its localised impacts, as both countries navigated through national, local and regional obstructions and hindrances towards finding an agreeable solution to their common border issues, through the implementation of the LBA. Despite the proliferation of mistrust, tensions and apprehensions at the local level against those who were otherised in statist, popular and political narratives; the nature of relationship shared between the enclave and non-enclave locals point towards a shared acknowledgement of its necessity in bypassing their specific, circumstantial deprivations. This points towards the presence of multiple, local sub-cultures, replete with embedded systems, processes and modes of both cooperative and conflictual

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engagements and negotiations. Although the abilities of such local networks were often compromised by inequalities and differences in power that were existent amongst its key actors; nevertheless they were effective in achieving agreement on certain core concerns – that is, bypassing their limited existences at the limits of the state. These local sub-cultures significantly enhanced stability, both in the absence and presence of the state in the enclaves and their adjacent locales.

The study therefore extends its analysis to understanding the nature of borderland resilience in the former composite enclave of DA, the largest enclave that was not exchanged between the countries, and therefore exists as an extension of Bangladeshi territory today. This site emerged as a key point of inquiry for this research, owing to the influence of two contending nationalisms, territorial systems, on its resident populations, and its surrounding locales. The timeline of its ceding to Bangladesh is replete with instances whereby the influence of the border, the operation of the contending nationalisms of the two states, manifested at the local level. These have been brought forth by the study through participant narratives drawn from the site and its adjacent locales and analysed to understand the processes of adaptation that emerged in the Bangladeshi borderland. Through an exploration of its history and contemporary dynamics, the chapter presents a case study of DA which engages with the resilient adaptability of the prevalent local structures and its interactions with national and bilateral authority and directives.

History of Dahagram-Angarpota: From Stateless Enclave to National Territory

Dahagram-Angarpota (DA) is the largest composite former Bangladeshi enclave situated within Indian Territory. Its only point of connection to the Bangladeshi mainland is located at a distance of 19 km away from *Thana* Patgram, of Bangladesh's Lalmonirhat district, connected through the TBC. Dahagram's geographical location has significantly impacted upon its emergence as a site of cross-border conflict and localised upheavals surrounding its transfer to Bangladesh, both within the enclave and its adjacent locales in India and Bangladesh. The former enclave is situated on the banks of the Teesta River, which exists as a riverine boundary shared with contiguous India villages. During the monsoon season, the swelling of the Teesta River confounds such easy demarcations especially, as frequent floods often displace communities who live close to the river, to seek out temporary refuge in places closer to DA's Indian boundaries.

The resolution to establish TBC was arrived at in 1974, an outcome of the bilateral Indira-Mujib Agreement which saw the reverse transfer of South Berubari to India in exchange for access to the DA enclave. However, the corridor could not be handed over to Bangladesh as the transfer required a constitutional amendment which was delayed in the Indian Parliament, further compounded by initial delays in the transfer of South Berubari to India. It was later, in 1992, that the TBC complex was authorised to be kept accessible, but only for a period of 12 hours a day, from 6 a.m. - 6 p.m., allowing regulated access between Bangladesh and DA, and its residents. This configuration continued to limit the access of its residents to medical aid, legal support, financial

institutions[58] and even family, beyond the stipulated durations of passage. In 2011, the corridor was permanently leased out to Bangladesh and kept open through the day, allowing the residents access from DA into Bangladesh, through Patgram. Prior to this, the corridor had been leased out on a token sum of Bangladesh Taka 1/year, signifying Indian possession over the Corridor complex, which has since been waived off as a sign of their bilateral recognition for the need of cooperation to maintain such a territorial configuration.

DA stands apart from other local enclaves in terms of its large area and the size of its resident population, and notably because of its locational setting within Indian Territory. The enclave is administered by Bangladesh, and constitutes one of the very few illustrations from the South Asian experience whereby governance is extended formally beyond the borders of the nation state, and this particular configuration is perpetually legitimised through its recognition and facilitation at a bilateral level. The extension of the Corridor's window of access has assuaged many of the difficulties previously faced by the enclave residents as a result of stateless and geographical isolation from Bangladesh. DA's local history has been subsequently textured by its location in relation to the India-Bangladesh border and its spatially contiguous Indian territories. This had consequent impacts upon local spatial perceptions of the contiguous Indian locale and one can assume, upon its detached Bangladeshi spatio-notional reproductions. These localised, cross-border concurrences have shaped the manner in which the space is perceived and positioned in the immediate locale, and how the local perceptions of the

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[58] These critical infrastructure were absent from Dahagram-Angarpota given its isolation from the East Pakistan (later, Bangladesh) state since its emergence as a state enclave in 1947. Therefore, till the integration of Dahagram-Angarpota into Bangladesh, residents were reliant on the Corridor to gain access to necessary institutions and services.

space have changed through the timeline of transformation from a stateless enclave to its identification as national territory.

Subsequent to the opening of the TBC in 1992, instances of conflict within the enclave and with adjacent locales became more frequent. Confusions over the actual limits of their borders were often used as a justification in classifying and addressing the emergence of such conflicts by the states concerned. Locally, however, the perceptions of the limits to one's mobility and access beyond their immediate locale, cemented through reinforcement of divergences between themselves and the 'other' (van Schendel 2005, p. 55-56), with these categories shifting between identities of Muslims, enclave dwellers, encroachers, and outsiders, depending upon the contingencies of a particular situation (Lorber, 1999) and the positionality of the subject articulating such assertions (Whyte 2002, p. 113-115). Therefore, these local conflicts appear to be positioned on local assertions over territorial claims, socio-cultural homogenisation of the local space interacting with the overarching bilateral and national narratives underlying its perception and classification spanning issues of territorial management, border regulation, functioning of state sovereignty as well as considerations of national security (Bhardwaj, 2005).

Given its isolation from the state, the development of infrastructure within the enclave has been skewed, in a similar manner as was observable in enclaves on the Indian side of the border, surveyed in the first stage of the study. Another feature that became apparent through interactions with respondents from DA was that the sense of exclusion and the consequential vulnerabilities that their isolated existence had brought about was more pronounced there due to the contested nature of their territory. The significance of the site

was a major concern of the larger bilateral negotiations between India and Bangladesh, surrounding the enclaves and the border, and their exchange (Ahmed, 2006) also brought about frequent detachments of the local from the considerations of its engagement. The imposition and revision of subsequent limitations to mobility upon the residents of DA had significantly affected their daily lives, criminalising daily activities such as procuring supplies for daily subsistence, cultivating their land, selling their produce, as well as customary transactions based on ties of kinship and familiarity, since in most cases the sites of these activities and procurements lay beyond their enclave's boundaries. As a consequence the mobilities and interactions of the residents of DA were frequently cast under the aspersions of suspicion and illegality (Uddin, 2019). Unlike the adjacent locales in India that had alleviated through collaboration the relative deprivations of its local enclave populations, DA's contested existence and detachment from the correspondent locales of national and notional identification, rendered their isolation more absolute in comparison. The history of DA therefore positions itself as a crucial juncture of inquiry into the manner in which trans-territorial associations within the enclaves shaped the local politics and associations; subsequently transforming the links that existed within the enclave as well as those between the enclave and non-enclave residents of this borderland locale in shaping local relations and perceptions of the state and their immediate space of existence.

Rationale of Approach, Challenges and Modifications

Dahagram-Angarpota has a recorded history of local level conflicts within the enclave and its adjacent localities, emerging in the aftermath of the 1965 War between

India and Pakistan[59]. The occurrence of these conflicts at these sites, before, during and after the transfer of DA to Bangladesh would have had impacted upon the local perceptions and grievances surrounding these watershed moments in the larger history of India-Bangladesh bilateralism. These locales therefore emerge as sites of inquiry into the spatialised impacts of the perceptions, interests and motivations based on which the progressions of India-Bangladesh relations have played out. An engagement with these local narratives brings forth critical insights into the nature of local acuities, adaptations that existed on the other side of the border; enabling an understanding of the differences in the dynamics of local interactions with the national and its ensuing manifestations of authority. A comparative approach towards experiences and narratives from both sides of the border will help in mapping the extents of, and overlaps within these particular locales; and the similarities and divergences in their adaptations, resilience or acquiescence to the national.

The selection of this site had been made keeping in mind the impact that the bilateral and local conflicts surrounding the establishment of the TBC have had on its surrounding enclaves; as well as non-enclave locales which have interacted in close proximity with the enclave residents in articulating common grievances and mobilising against the transfer of DA by the Indian Government. DA has a recorded history of local mobilisations which have exhibited similar convergences with the Indian locales studied, in terms of their mirroring of the incompatibilities underlying India-Pakistan, and later

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[59] Following the Partition of British India in 1947, India and Pakistan contended over several issues, especially regarding territorial claims and border disputes. The Rann of Kutch was a disputed region in the Indian state of Gujarat. From 1956 onwards, bilateral contentions over the space emerged over controlling the region, and eventually with an escalation of hostilities following lesser disputes and skirmishes over the area, the conflict escalated into an all-out war in 1965.

India-Bangladesh relations through various stages of its history. Since the territorial status of the area has remained unchanged, albeit its shift from a *de jure* claim to a *de facto* recognition[60], its locational setting can be viewed to have led to the emergence of very distinct local and national contestations surrounding the transfer. The localised impacts and productions of past and contemporary articulations of belonging in this site provide critical insights into the manner in which its residents understand and recollect the history of their own belonging. The peculiarities underlying their relative spatial configuration provides a glimpse into the nature of relationships and interactions that emerged between the different and often, fluid identifications of religious, ethnic and linguistic identities held by the local inhabitants in navigating local and national cycles of violence, limited mobilities, lack of access to resources and opportunities. Besides these insights, contestations with regard to opposing productions and practices of belonging that played out at the local will provide an understanding into the nature of borderland identities, and how the conflicting nationalisms at play in the state's spatial limits can inform the nature of associations between its resident communities.

Modifications to the initial plan of conducting an *in-situ* study in DA was rendered unfeasible due to the changing political circumstances in the field site; which was perceived to be an outcome of the NRC's implementation in Assam[61]. Attempts towards

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[60] Dahagram-Angarpota existed as an enclave of Bangladesh in India. Unlike other enclaves whose status of recognition was changed due to their setting within the national space of the other country, Dahagram-Angarpota was now formally recognised as Bangladeshi national territory, although it was still enclosed by Indian Territory. For this reason, the resolution of the Dahagram-Angarpota dispute can be viewed as the first instance in the region whereby countries bilaterally facilitated the extension of sovereign authority through another country's territory.

[61] The National Register of Citizens (NRC) was an enumerative list maintained by the Government of India for the state of Assam, containing information and details of citizens of the state, first introduced through

engaging with issues of identity were often met with silence as most respondents felt uncomfortable and expressed their reluctance in discussing issues which they felt would jeopardise their position within the immediate locality, or would compromise their recently attained citizenship. Local incidences of conflict also disrupted established points of contact with the local population as well[62]. Entry was to be facilitated by a local contact whose in-laws reside in DA. However, the changed circumstances of the local encountered during the second phase led to this point-of-contact falling through as those who would frequently cross the border to visit family were now patently unwilling to do so feeling that it may expose them to suspicions of being illegal immigrants. Despite attempts to substantiate the scope of the study and the assurance of anonymity, their reluctant position did not change. Further attempts were avoided to prevent compromising the level of local familiarity gained over the course of previous visits. Accessing sites in Bangladesh through a third party was considered, but later withdrawn as it felt that such an approach would inadvertently bring forth barriers not encountered in the first phase of studying the Indian local narratives. Given that the research engages with sensitive and locally 'settled' issues such as identity, and explorations of informal practices that verge on illegality, this shift was necessitated. The only feasible option left, given these circumstances and considerations, would be to engage with these 'distant'

its census of 1951. Its recent updating in the state and its proposed nation-wide implementation by the government in power sparked nationwide protests questioning the government's plugging of the Citizenship Amendment Act along with it in defining categories of individuals who qualified for citizenship to the country, based on their time of entry. Local apprehension in the sites of study emerged due to rumours that such lists would be extended to include former enclave residents given that they had received citizenship much after the CAA and NRC's stipulations on the cut-off year of entry.

[62] During the course of the study, there were incidences of strife in the surrounding localities, namely Dinhata, as well as in the local Enclave Settlement Camps prompted by fears of the NRC's implementation, which in one instance escalated due to a clash between human rights organisations attempting to gather statements from its residents and local political opposition.

and 'unreachable' narratives through local contacts, using their help in accessing sites of entry and using their foreknowledge of the frequency and timing of such crossings to plan interactions with respondents.

The changed field site brought forth necessities to modify the approach with a shift in focus towards first-hand interactions, focussed group discussions and narrative-engagements with those engaged in illegal and legal crossings. The respondents were a mix of individuals who were involved in periodic, legal border crossings from DA to access local markets on the Indian side of the border or those who would cross over the more porous sectors of the local border to visit family and friends and other acquaintances.

Relevant narratives from the site of DA were drawn through interactions with residents who would cross over to India from the nearest Land Entry Point at Changrabandha, which is 12.5 kilometres away from *chhit* Sheupara. Respondents would also frequently bypass state regulations to gain access to the Indian side for a variety of reasons. These respondents' narratives provide key insights on how their locational setting and shared history with these adjacent Indian locales prompted the preservation of old relationships, interactions and perceptions of permissibility since DA's transfer, even if such interfaces played out against the state's categorisations of permissible mobilities and interactions (Fassin 2011). The familiarity that was established with local participants and contacts over the course of the first phase of fieldwork in *chhit* Sheupara, facilitated access points

to respondents from DA, as most of them share filial linkages and even bonds of fictive kinship[63].

Given the porosity of the border at certain points in the locality, the Bangladeshi citizens of DA would often frequent local markets in Sheupara. This also served as a crucial point of access to respondents. During the course of the study, meetings with inhabitants from other former Indian enclaves in Bangladesh who would frequently pass through the local Land Entry Point were also recorded and included within the framework of inquiry. This allowed for the study to map the similarities and divergences in the local production of the DA space in relation to other enclaves; and their specific and common adaptations, conflicts and resistances. Respondents from DA usually met around a forested sand bar adjacent to Sheupara, separated by a dirt road boundary which marks out the limits of their mobility out of their enclave. Interactions in the space vis-à-vis the residents of these two locales have exhibited flexibilities conditioned by the necessity of mutual assistance in community projects with shared benefits, such as, the construction of dirt roads or bunds and dams during the monsoon on either side of the border by the local residents (Rahman & van Schendel, 2003). Their shared history of interactions has textured prevalent social relations between the local inhabitants, and the specific points in that dirt road were often used as common meeting points where inhabitants from both sides could interact without crossing their national borders. These local flexibilities were also facilitated by allowances made by the Border Security Forces patrolling the area,

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[63] These local levels exhibited forms of association not based on familial or marital ties, but associations of familiarity that often prompted the extension of appellations of kinship.

which did not view such interactions as disruptive or dissident, and therefore did not stop them.

History of Local Conflicts

In the recent past, DA emerged as the site of local violence and contentions whose incidences can be viewed as an outcome of extant bilateral conflicts between India and Pakistan. Regional tensions had mounted between the two countries during the 1960s over the Kashmir issue[64], as an outcome of which their Eastern and Western borders came to be significantly militarised contributing to a heightened sense of tension even at the local levels of their borderlands. Subsequently, there was a replication of similar settings in spaces where analogous local contestations manifested in the form of divided identities and incongruent territorialised associations, most notably in DA and its adjacent locales. The narrativisation of the DA conflict can be traced through the upheavals in the bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh, and before 1971, with Pakistan. The subsequent sections engaging with the local conflict in DA, traces the crests and troughs in the local conflict cycle and its convergences with the larger national narratives underlying the transfer of DA to Bangladesh.

Through the course of the DA's history of communal tensions, old linkages of neighbourhood and kinship were suddenly fractured, as people from surrounding Indian villages began to identify DA as a source of communal conflict. As a consequence, its Muslim residents could not fall back on their sense of familiarity with their detached

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[64] The Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 was a result of continuing small-scale conflicts which originated following Pakistan's infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir in an attempt to precipitate a local insurgency against Indian Rule in the region.

country of association as it would often invite the indignation of the neighbouring Indian villagers, a trend that had grown more severe following the DA riots. The Hindu residents were caught in a conundrum as their affiliation to DA and Bangladesh came under greater local scrutiny, both within and outside of the enclave's confines. They were caught in between having to dissociate all ties beyond the border in India and at the same time, their loyalty to Bangladesh was never accepted by their fellow inhabitants, viz., the predominant Muslim sections of DA's population, given the mutual mistrust that had taken root in local perceptions of the other following the emergence of communal tensions in the area. Relations between the larger community of DA residents and villagers from adjacent locales conversely went through a phase of stabilisation after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, as national and local acuities came to be momentarily grounded on perceptions of fraternity based on a common linguistic identity; a perception that was established between the Bengali communities and their political representatives in India and Bangladesh in their common fight against their persecution by the Pakistani government. Participant narratives recall how, subsequent to the Liberation War, relations had progressed towards normalisation. However, the migration of the Hindu inhabitants of DA carried on regardless.

"After the Independence of Bangladesh our situation had normalised to some extent. However, the Hindi inhabitants did not stop leaving DA for India. That fear had been implanted in them. They were less in number, so they would think that if any similar danger was to befall, they would be unable to save themselves. Because of their leaving, people from neighbouring villages would consider us responsible for their displacement. That is why they hold us responsible for the establishment of the Corridor." (Field Interview, 27.11.2019)

Mobilisations for the expulsion of DA's Muslim populations by the Hindu residents of the enclave became a frequent occurrence at the local level after the Liberation War of 1971. These displacements were supported by DA's adjacent Hindu-dominated Indian locales whose residents encouraged local agitations towards claiming the enclave as a part of India. This generated responses from within the local Muslim community to mobilise along similar, communal claims over Dahagram-Angarpota's custodianship. The emergence of such voices within the enclave align with the larger socio-political shifts in Bangladesh's secular disposition that were observable following Zia-Ur Rahman's assumption of leadership[65]. These shifts at the national level lent a renewed vigour with which local assertions were now being made over Dahagram-Angarpota, in an effort to reclaim their own territory from the territorial trappings of Indian encirclement. Echoes of the same sentiments at the national levels came in the form of state avowals and promises of extended support to the local populations' struggles against those who would be opposed to this claim. Local narratives recounted rumours that escalated local fears of an impending conflict that were spread during these periods.

"People used to live in fear that anything could happen, at any given day. Tensions were also high during these times, and we would try our best to go through our days without inviting any trouble. There were rumours that guns had been given by the Bangladeshi government to the

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[65] Secularism was removed from Bangladesh's constitution by directive of Martial Law in 1977, under the military dictatorship of Ziaur Rahman. In 1988, the Parliament of Bangladesh, under the Presidency of Hussain Muhammad Ershad declared Islam as the state religion. Following the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1990, the two major political parties in the national government, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League retained Islam as the state religion. It was only in 2010, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh deemed the removal of secularism in 1977 as illegal and its means, unconstitutional, and reinstated it in the constitution, which co-exists alongside the constitutional identification of a state religion.

Muslims in Dahagram. But we also heard stories about Hindu families who had weapons too."

(Field Interview, 4.12.2018)

A national census that was conducted in Dahagram in 1981 by the Bangladeshi government also became a source of conflict between the enclave and its adjacent Indian locales. The census was proposed by the Bangladeshi state to enumerate the local population, as the first steps towards negotiating the terms of the proposed corridor with India. For this purpose, the countries required data on the populations residing in these areas to understand local opinions on a probable transfer of DA to Bangladesh and to detail the configurations of population transfers that would be prompted by the same. The census may be viewed as the first steps taken by the Bangladeshi state in legitimising the presence of the enclave population and also recognising their claims to belonging to a national space (Scott 1998, p. 11-52). These steps augmented localised articulations of association to the national space echoed by those who were in favour of DA's transfer. However, this was viewed as a direct threat to those opposing the transfer, mostly constituting the local Hindu populations and the adjacent Indian locales[66], as they felt that this process amounted to a formal enumeration of citizens which signified the legitimisation of their claims over DA (Whyte 2002, p. 134).

The emergence of informal local associations, based around particularistic articulations of the event in Dahagram-Angarpota was a key outcome of the local conflict surrounding the issue. Participant narratives recurrently mentioned the *Dahagram Sangram Samiti*

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[66] Adjacent Indian locales viewed Dahagram-Angarpota as a rightful, inextricable part of their local and national imaginations, as their memories of the locale, and its extrapolations to their national consciousness were constructed through their unfettered interactions with the socio-spatial configurations of the former enclave.

(Dahagram Liberation Council) which was founded with the intent of mobilising against a possible transfer of the enclave to India. The members consisted predominantly of the more elite sections of the inhabitant sociality, especially families which had resided there for more than two generations. According to certain participants, those who had been selected by the Government of Bangladesh as enumerators to conduct the aforementioned census were at the forefront of constituting this body assembly[67]. These assemblies provided the local populations with some basic form of representation and a common forum to articulate grievances and raise awareness regarding the evolving bilateral dispute surrounding DA's transfer. Such bodies also sent representatives to the capital and local centres of administration across the border in Patgram, Bangladesh. Representation and participation in these *Samitis* allowed the residents of DA to assert their identity as active political subjects, who were striving for inclusion within the state they notionally associated with. The existence of these local processes stands in stark contrast to notions of statelessness that have usually imbued the discernment of enclave populations, as hapless objects of state management (O'Hanlon, 2000). The establishment of the *Dahagram Sangram Samiti*, led to the mushrooming of similar agglomerations in the locale which represented the concerns of inhabitants who opposed the ceding of Dahagram-Angarpota and the establishment of the Corridor. In the due course of their emergence and functioning, such associations began to align with nationalist political parties (Ramachandran, 1999) from their states of association as a means of not only legitimising their struggle but also to 're-nationalise' the issue (Gillan,

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[67] Familiarity with the locals was possibly a necessity in selection, to aid in navigating the challenges of asking sensitive questions regarding local opinions regarding the transfer; as it could lay bare their affiliate nationalities and allegiances in a conflict setting where their opinion on the same determined their security.

2002) to lend credibility to these local struggles through its linkages with ideas of the 'unbroken motherland' (Krishna, 1994).

Perceptions surrounding the transfer of DA were divided along two very distinct narratives, each emanating from collectives embodying divergent spatial and cultural positionalities. The one originating from within DA underscored the significance of retaining the enclave as a part of Bangladeshi territory and not relenting to the pressures exacted upon its predominantly Muslim population, by neighbouring villages and the Indian state. On the other side of the border, groups constituted mostly of Hindus who were former residents of the enclave and locals from adjacent India villages, viewed their claims over DA as legitimate based on their shared territorial and historical contiguities. The years leading up to the opening of the TBC saw DA receive formal recognition by the state, through its appellations at their national levels. Despite local protests in India, the Ershad-regime in Bangladesh lent DA formal political inclusion within the state's administrative system by establishing an official Union *Parishad* there, replicating the administrative structures and processes that were existent in the mainland. These steps were welcomed by the residents and were the first major step towards their inclusion into the Bangladeshi state. In part, this was the outcome of the mobilisations that were fronted by the *Samitis* functioning within the enclave, which brought forth national recognition of issues that had previously been confined to the local level of their existence.

Local accounts from the Indian side of the study bring forth how the formal recognition of the transfer at bilateral level had sparked off a forceful displacement of Muslim residents from Bangladeshi enclaves in India back across the border. In certain cases, these flights were motivated by fear, whereas in some instances these families were

forced out by the local Hindu populations in pre-empting retribution for what was to happen to the minority Hindu populations in DA. This was mirrored by similar displacements and flights of Hindus out of DA into the adjacent Indian locales.

"There was an atmosphere of tension in Dahagram. We knew we would have to leave as we heard how they (residents from adjacent Indian locales) were throwing out Muslim families from their villages. We were always prepared to run away." (Field Interview, 6.11.2019)

An official ceasefire was signed between India and the East Pakistani armed forces that had to be deployed to steady the local situation. Their presence brought a halt to these movements and allowed the displaced families to return back to DA. The Indian government also agreed to provide compensation packages for the damages incurred by these families in the loss of their homes which were burnt down by the agitating groups in DA. This had created some discontent on the Indian side of the border; whose local residents felt that such extensions of support by their state was unnecessary as they felt the conflict had been instigated by the residents of DA. This issue was frequently manoeuvred as political capital by local leaders and their influence over local governmental authorities and institutions, manifested in the form of official abeyance towards the uprooting of Muslim families in local villages by its Hindu populations.

The adjacent Indian villages of Mekhliganj and Kuchlibari remained in a state of continuing tensions as previous mobilities across the border into the DA enclave which had been commonplace prior to the Partition were completely stopped by its resident populations, comprising both enclave and non-enclave residents. The emergence of DA as a site of local conflict, textured by the prevalent nationalisms of the two states,

ruptured old linkages that existed at the local level, resulting in a shift in local socio-spatial configurations and perceptions. The narratives surrounding the origins of this conflict locally referred to as the Dahagram *juddho* (war) exhibits similarities in its recollection amongst former DA residents and those from its neighbouring Indian villages, which may be attributed to their shared perceptions surrounding the final status of DA. These recollections position responsibility on the local Muslim majority of DA who they claim oppressed the Hindu minority there. According to participant narratives from the Indian side of the border, people had tried to cross over to Bangladesh through the TBC to escape the violence that had broken out in DA. However, the heavy presence of the BSF around its peripheries blocked their way out of the enclave. Most people were therefore trapped in DA, having retreated into nearby fields and bamboo groves for cover from the BSF out of fear that they may have crossed the border into India in attempting to escape the scouting mob of local residents. Families that resided closer to the TBC returned once the violence stopped and were able to salvage whatever little they could carry back, while those who fled DA into neighbouring Indian locales were left completely dependent on other survivors for sharing supplies, water and shelter. This episode of violence in DA's history significantly transformed the local demography significantly as families uprooted their lives from the enclave and either moved to Patgram, Bangladesh or to Mekhliganj and Kuchlibari in India. The influx of people from DA into these locales created problems for the sites that received these displaced groups. The resources available to the locality were stretched thin in providing for those seeking refuge there, and most were temporarily housed in the area's schools, bus terminus, or the homes of family and friends.

Following long periods of persistent tensions between the Indian villages surrounding DA and its residents, the TBC was finally opened in June 1992, amidst widespread local protests on the Indian side of the border. Although it alleviated the problems of the residents of the largest composite enclave in the India-Bangladesh borderland, it also brought forth new complications in reconfiguring prevalent local understandings and productions of sovereignty, belonging and identity in the enclave for its Muslim and Hindu inhabitants. The transfer prompted an outflow of Hindu inhabitants away from the enclave, which was mirrored by similar displacements of Muslim villagers from the neighbouring Indian villages out of fear of being reduced to a minority in their localities. Subsequent to the Corridor's opening the shift of populations across the enclave's borders was almost certain, as it signified the formal recognition of Bangladesh's *de jure* claims over DA. Participant narratives of former DA residents recount experiences of oppression, harassment and localised persecution as the major push factors that prompted them to move to India. This marked a demographic transition within the enclave with the abortive sale of land by those on their way out, which were either purchased or seized by the remaining populations in DA. There was a subsequent shift in the axes of local distinctions of belonging from grounds of religion (prior to the exchange) to one that of long term residents and newer entrants who through speculative acquisitions of these deserted landholdings established themselves as prosperous small-scale farmers. Their economic affluence manifested as social and political influence over the local community, as they grew into a new middle class in DA, employing the local populations in agricultural labour, providing them with credits and other forms of informal financial provisions, and also acted as channels that could facilitate exists out of DA for original

residents who looked for new beginnings. With the gradual formalisation of the border through the establishment of bilateral commissions entrusted with the purpose of resolving outstanding territorial disputes and claims, as well as the organisation of paramilitary groups that patrolled the border (van Schendel 2005, p. 86-110), the relationships between the residents of DA and locals from its surrounding Indian villages came to be positioned deeper in acuities of separation and cultural incongruence, frequently impelled in their recollections of the past and their altered present, positioning their current circumstances as an inevitable outcome of the larger bilateral conflict that textured local socio-political dynamics. Although these narratives appear to stand in stark contrast with recalled memories of a shared past prior to the nationalisation of the DA issue – whereby communal lines were often blurred by the contingencies of dependence that marked the lives of those inhabiting the enclave borderlands – the locally held perceptions underlying a DA resident today, rests steeped in motifs of exclusion and un-belonging, pointing towards a local desire to extricate their present circumstances from their shared local historiography.

Perceptions of the conflict are convoluted further by inquiries into the relationships shared in the past amongst DA residents; whose population was somewhat roughly divided between Hindus and Muslims before the outbreak of the conflict. Subsequently, varied identifications of what DA was or ought to have been emerged through such interactions; with past contemplations being founded upon fluctuating memories of co-existence and on fabricated histories based on the imagined singularity of occupation and possession of its territory by one community – with the Hindu population on the Indian side of the border viewing DA as a part of India, demanding its integration to its national

territory, whereas Muslims who were alienated from all socio-cultural mores of the mainland, regarded the space as a part of a larger Muslim territory of Bangladesh. What often confounded such steady, imagined demarcations of the past was the Pakistani pogrom against its citizens in its Eastern flank, leading to the emergence of a nascent localised solidarity on the basis of linguistic commonality shared between the borderland citizens and stateless locals of then East Pakistan, and India.

Local Contestation and Cooperation in Dahagram-Angarpota

The emergence of Dahagram-Angarpota as a site of local contestations, and its existence as a stateless enclave brought forth many local adaptations in assuaging its extant circumstances of deprivation, isolation and violence. These adaptations were carried out in patterns observed on the Indian side of the border, and also spanned similar spheres of their emergence. These changes brought about through interactions between various actor groups at the local level are indicative of the resilience of the borderland local. The ability of the local to adapt to these ever-changing circumstances brought forth by the state's intercession, or shifts in local perceptions brought forth by the same establishes the foundations of a fluid local, that is constantly reconfiguring the dynamics of its constitutive interactions and relationships. These interactions were coloured by the power that certain configurations of identities and positionalities carried at particular points in time, which modulated the equitability underlying these processes, and through such extrapolations new inequalities at the local level began to emerge as a consequence. These propositions can be evidenced by an exploration of the different processes and adaptations that emerged in DA and its adjacent locales, spanning social, political and economic purviews of local engagement. Local accounts engaged within the subsequent

sections provide an insight into these processes and practices of adaptation evinced at various levels and scales of local engagement and draws out the similarities and differences in their productions in circumstantially comparable, but geographically dispersed settings. The following insights bring forth the impacts that particular national narratives have on local socio-spatial configurations, and understanding its perceptions and productions of national and bilateral conflicts through its adaptations to either bypass or integrate the same.

Grievances surrounding the loss of land as a result of the state's border making practices were commonly encountered in participant narratives of DA residents. The state's borders cut across homesteads and cultivable stretches of land and classified past mobilities in and across such spaces as illegal; as movement beyond the enclave boundaries for its stateless residents constituted an inconceivable risk. At the same time, relocations motivated by communal tensions (as discussed in the previous section) also led many residents to lose their lands in DA. Consequently, the exchanges that the inhabitants of DA were reliant on, in their interactions with residents from surrounding localities suddenly ceased due to the ceding of the enclave to Bangladesh. The local profusion of these interactions and exchanges, which among other forms manifested in the form of employment as seasonal labour in surrounding agricultural lands declined when their border came to be more securitised, through an increased presence of BSF personnel after the transfer. These changes in local settings deprived DA inhabitants of their access to old networks of employment, forcing them to travel to the Bangladeshi mainland through the TBC for work, and in seeking markets for selling their produce.

"My father lost a lot of land. The BSF began to patrol these areas and would tell us not to go there. We sold that land. Some would find work in fields outside of Dahagram. Those who lost all their land due to illegitimate seizure due to fabricated paperwork had no other option. They slowly started to move out and settle down in India." (Field Interview, 15.11.2019)

This situation was assuaged to an extent in 1950 when a decision taken by the Bangladeshi government allowed the import of certain earmarked goods into the enclaves such as kerosene oil, medicine and commodities of daily ration such as cooking oil, salt and sugar. However, the agreement did not contain provisions for the export of agricultural products such as jute, rice and tobacco to the mainland from the enclaves to markets in Bangladesh. Since no vehicles at that point were allowed across the border, people carried only as much as they could manage to physically carry with them. To bypass these restrictions, the inhabitants of DA had no other option but to cross their borders and find local markets in the adjacent Indian localities, most prominently the weekly *haats*[68] in Mekhliganj. These movements carried the risk of being caught by the BSF, and therefore individuals who were engaged in frequent crossings established connections with contacts on the Indian side of the border who would either facilitate their access or carry back their produce from pre-decided drop-offs near un-patrolled sections of the border, to sell them in local markets for a minimal cut for their efforts.

Prior to the corridor's opening, the residents of DA were dependent on neighbouring Indian villages for their subsistence, as mentioned earlier. However, given the underlying precariousness of having to traverse the enclave's borders to access these sites presented

[68] Local farmers' markets that gather weekly are still popular in the locality and to this day attract buyers from across the border as well, who often make their purchases through local proxies.

a new set of challenges, in interacting with the BDR and BSF officials[69] patrolling these regions. These movements have, since the opening of the corridor, dwindled as DA's inhabitants are no longer solely reliant on Indian markets for selling their produce. However, it has also hindered their abilities to secure the best price for their produce given the lack of selling options. The nearest accessible market is Patgram, and having no other option, buyers often impose ceilings on prices of crops, aware of the fact that the residents have no other alternative selling points. Other markets are situated further away in the Bangladesh mainland, and it is often difficult for these farmers to break-even on their investment after having sustained additional expenses in accessing these sites and transporting their produce. Before the corridor was opened through the day, inhabitants had to sell their produce at the prices they received as they had to travel back to DA before 6 pm, before the corridor's closure for the day. These stipulations impacted upon local means to a livelihood as prospective buyers and wholesalers took advantage of these regulations to their terms of access and mobilities. Local despondency had been further compounded by its stateless residents' inability to draw loans from the *Grameen* Banks[70] or even apply for state-distributed rations.

"After the Corridor was opened, it became difficult for us to access markets on the other side of the border. We used to live in fear, because Hindus were a minority. That is why before the opening of the Corridor, we would come to India to access the markets, and had close ties with

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[69] Often these accounts are exaggerated in terms of the experiences of those who had come into contact with patrolling authorities, often imbued with a sense of male bravado at having taken on such risky ventures and having the wiliness to escape unscathed (Sur, 2014).

[70] These are microfinance organisations in Bangladesh which work towards expediting community development in rural parts of the country; by extending loans without collateral to the economically weaker sections of the local populaces.

people here. But when we had to go to Patgram, the buyers there would not give us a fair price

for our produce. We had to incur losses there." (Field Interview, 17.10.2019)

The accruement of local debt led to the emergence of cultivation systems and processes similar in machination to what was observed in the Indian enclaves, namely *adha-chaash* or *bhaag-chaash*, in DA. In these configurations, individual, owner-cultivators were engaged in sharecropping one plot, while simultaneously cultivating land that they were tenured to through informal contracts with a private sponsor[71]. These interdependencies were further replicated by these cultivators in delegating similar responsibilities through paid contracts to lesser, local cultivators employed under them. Therefore, the overlaps in systems of land management and the nature of agro-economy were visible across both enclave and non-enclave localities in India and Bangladesh. In most cases observed in Indian locales, the emergence of these systems was evinced by the inability of the enclave residents to access state welfare packages and subsidised seeds and fertilisers, which led to the transference of local claims for employment and finance to local land owning classes constituting the emergent middle class. The amplification of such dependence was further augmented by the absence of the state, similarly recounted in narratives of DA residents, as their inability to pay off these debts or secure the terms of their inhabitancy/cultivation contracts would compound, culminating in the seizure of land and their re-employment as tenured employment which often characterised a local variance of bonded labour.

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[71] This category comprised mostly of more affluent land-owners or local investors who brought together residents to invest in cropping cycles for a proportionate share of the profits.

Shifts from agricultural labour amongst the resident population in DA due to a decline in its profitability, led many to turn towards shingle extraction from adjacent river banks. The shingle is supplied to various parts of the country, to be processed and used for construction purposes. These practices are unregulated, and comprise the extraction of larger boulders and rocks from the Teesta river banks. This has led to significant erosion of the river banks around the eastern peripheries of DA, which brings under threat of flooding during the monsoon months adjacent plots of agricultural land. The trafficking of river rocks and boulders to Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, a prevalent local practice has also emerged in collusion with non-enclave locales. In most cases, this is carried out by registered trucks owned by non-residents, which carry the freight to different points of sale across the border. Often financiers employ multiple trucks to this end, registered under different names to bypass the ceiling imposed on the frequency of trips allowed per vehicle in order to secure more profits. The local impacts of such practices have manifested in the form of localised erosion and damage to DA's river banks and embankments that protects the enclave from flooding during the monsoon period.

"We used to get rocks and boulders from these sand islands in the river and sell it to the dealers. But we did not have any vehicles; so at most, five of us would bring 10-15 kilos a day. We used to get fifty or sixty Taakas per kilogram. But there were a few who would use their cycle-vans and would bring much more. As a result they paid us less, when they saw others bringing in more quantities. We would ask people with trucks to help us, and we would give them a share of the profits." (Field Interview, 7.1.2019)

The intractability of the enclave residents' stateless identity was often challenged by their attempts to secure access to basic services and facilities. However, unlike in the enclaves

on the Indian side of the border that were embedded within local socialities, DA's relative socio-spatial entrenchments made such complicities more difficult to attain between the residents of DA and its adjacent locales. Enrolment in schools for the residents of DA has been difficult to secure as admissions to government-run schools in the locality demanded recommendations for admission to be forwarded by the local *Panchayat*. These references were difficult to secure for the enclave residents of DA before their integration, for two reasons. Firstly, associations with adjacent Indian locales could only help in securing a seat in an Indian school, which would require their children to cross over their borders illegally for access. Secondly, since DA was geographically detached from the Bangladeshi mainland, their access to schools there was also limited given the distance. The absence of formal registrations of births and deaths in DA had also rendered an entire generation devoid of any official certification of personal credentials, deemed mandatory for securing admission to local schools and colleges. This not only led to their exclusion from avenues for education but subsequently, inhibited their opportunities for employment and even mobility beyond the confines of their enclaved existences. A local means to bypass the same was done through the citing of the addresses of relatives or acquaintances residing outside of the enclaves to secure jobs and seats in educational institutions. However, the nature of employment secured was mostly informal and access to educational institutions was also impeded by the transience underlying local configurations that led many parents to fear sending their children to shared, community spaces like schools.

"We could not secure higher education, or sit for our school passing exam. I studied in a school outside of the enclave till the third standard, but could not continue beyond that because to sit

for the graduating exam we needed to produce our birth certificate. That is why I dropped out."

(Field Interview, 10.10.2019)

For the DA residents who sent their children to schools situated beyond enclave borders in India, the certifications they received did not hold any value in Bangladesh where they sought to live and work. As a consequence, many who received their education in India sought out employment opportunities there itself, for which they either crossed the border periodically to fulfil the necessary requirements for employment, while others shifted permanently. A majority of families did not send their children to school, and instead, they were made to work as agricultural labour in their own fields, or in those owned by others which led to a significant decline in the levels of literacy within the enclave, relative to that of Bangladeshi villages exhibiting analogous socio-economic compositions – an impact of their specific socio-spatial configuration. Since the opening of the corridor however, DA has undergone substantial transformations in terms of infrastructural development and the state has also inserted itself in ensuring the availability of better means of communication and transportation for its residents. In terms of the avenues for education, there are six primary schools in the enclave today, one high school and several community-run madrasas that cater to the predominant Muslim resident community.

The opening of the corridor fomented an exodus of the resident population to the mainland in order to secure more stable forms of employment and to escape the vagaries of life within such a contested space with limited opportunities. This had been compounded by another wave of migration of Hindu residents to India in order to escape

communal tensions that had attained a more visible contouring following the 1965 war between India and Pakistan.

"A lot of families left. They no longer wanted to continue living under such circumstances. Some of them came to India, mostly the Hindu families. After the Dahagram war no one had the courage to continue living there. The situation has changed significantly since." (Field Interview, 7.10.2019)

The fraught relationship between the enclave and non-enclave locals was frequently asserted in interactions with DA residents. At the same time, operating within these overarching animosities were frameworks of negotiation and cooperation between residents of DA and its adjacent locals. Although the prevalence of conflict at the local level overshadowed instances of local collaboration, old networks of reliance spanning across the new border existed within the communal boundaries that existed within DA, shaped by the local histories of Partition and the Liberation war. The perpetuity of these relationships and interactions can be substantiated to any extent by the commonness of their struggle in eking out a life that could cut through their shared and divergent deprivations. Even after the formalisation of the border and its subsequent militarisation, which had impacted upon the frequency with which illegal crossings or interactions across the border could be expedited; these relations amongst former residents of the enclave remained intact. Although most people began to rely on formal processes and means of entry into India now, instances of people crossing over from the less monitored sectors of the international border with DA persisted as a remnant of an older local reality of unfettered access and mobility.

"We could not leave without papers. But to get them we had to cross the border. We were trapped. That is why we had no other option, we would cross over at night or under cover of fog, to avoid being detected, stay over at a relative or friend's place. After that we would go to the local markets, buy and sell what we had too and then return to Dahagram at night." (Field Interview, 15.11.2019)

Marriages have been a recurrent form in which these cross-border interactions have manifested and have often served as the connective link between the enclave communities and its surrounding non-enclave localities. These affinal ties validated the enclave residents' claims to belonging to these non-enclave localities and by extension allowed them to assert the same to lay an extended claim to rights, mobilities and accesses which were unavailable to them in their original locational settings within DA (Jones, 2009; Shewly, 2013). This provided individuals engaged in frequent border crossings with a safety-net to escape legal persecution in the off chance of being apprehended by local authorities, as they now could cite their relationships with families they had secured ties with through marriage to disclaim the illegality of their movements into and presence at the local levels. Such associations, however, were not easily secured by the families residing in DA. Often their identity as enclave residents acted as an impediment towards obtaining proposals of marriage for their children. At times, prospective alliances with families in DA would be declined on account of the uncertainties surrounding their lives. DA's history of violence also impeded potential cross-border alliances. Given DA's erstwhile stateless existence, the registration of marriages had to be done in the mainland. Since it was an inconceivable risk for most, the non-registration of marriages resulted in high instances of desertion at the local level, as

partners, mostly women were not protected by formal processes of separation and spousal care.

"A lot of times proposals for marriage would fall apart because we were enclave residents. Our neighbours would always try to arrange marriages with families from Bangladesh so that they could sell their cattle in the markets through their in-laws. It was profitable for girls from a family to be married off to a family from the mainland. Boys would mostly marry from within the enclave itself." (Field Interview, 16.10.2019)

Individuals, who chose to relocate to India from DA before the implementation of the Land Boundary Agreement in 2015, were prompted by the uncertainty surrounding the resolution process. Some claimed that the failure of attempts at the bilateral level to bring about a resolution of the issue, pushed them to make the move on their own, bypassing the states' regulatory and monitoring mechanisms in an effort to escape the uncertainties and insecurities that had come to texture life in DA. Interactions with local participants brought forth the specifics of the unstructured and expedient nature of these shifts, revealing accounts of how some individuals and families had to give up their land to move out of DA. Those who managed to sell their land did so at very low rates, because of the uncertainty surrounding their final status that was to be determined by the bilateral resolution process. In the absence of any formal institutional safeguards, enclave residents fell back on informal, social capital networks both within and outside of DA borders to facilitate the offloading of any fixed assets before relocating, or at times expediting the process in a *post facto* manner. Those who relocated without much time to settle their affairs in the enclaves handed over the responsibility for the sale of their lands to friends or relatives, entrusting them with the transfer of funds back to them upon its

sale. However, some are yet to receive the funds from the sale, while others claim that they received news from their guardians claiming that their lands had been forcefully occupied by encroachers upon their vacating the same.

"We asked about our money, but they said that our land had been grabbed by someone else. They claimed they were afraid to do anything, as they were not the owners. We could not go back, and had to make our peace with these losses." (Field Interview, 14.10.2019)

Before the ceding of DA to Bangladesh, it was common for inhabitants there to cite the addresses of family members as well as friends residing in adjacent Indian locals to gain access to identification cards, financial institutions and land brokers. Those who wanted to sell their land had to do so through brokers in India who would procure notarised stamp papers, which in the absence of any official ownership papers from the Bangladeshi government, served as markers of legitimacy for these transactions. Often, these individuals were conned by these brokers as they would sign over their properties in their own name and lay claim on entitlements such as land or other assets that these enclave residents sought to offload. Devoid of any system of legal recourse in the enclave, prevented its inhabitants from pursuing any legal action and accounts of loss of land through proxy sales were recurrent. Individuals, who chose to relocate to India before the ceding of DA, sought a quicker turnaround to escape before their access out of the enclave would be deemed illegal. These abortive sales were not profitable for the sellers, and often they would incur losses in paying commission to these brokers, and were compelled to sell off their land at reduced rates. The land was often divided into smaller holdings by these brokers to gain multiple profits from the sale of a single land holding, by taking control of the larger piece of land, then dividing it and selling it off to

multiple buyers in DA. Participants stated that often such agreements would be orally executed in the presence of witnesses which removed any accountability on part of the facilitator. Enclaves that had functional committees issued their own documents of proprietorship gathered from the nearby Indian village of Haldibari, whose validity did not extend beyond the enclave's borders, as a result of which the prices they received through these abortive sales could never match the base prices of non-enclave land. To fill this institutional gap, informal local associations which mushroomed at the local level, provided unauthorised documentations of local proprietorship over Indian enclave land in Bangladesh. These papers issued by these Enclave Peoples' Committees (EPC) were locally considered an authentic certification of the enclave residents' identity as Indians, through their recognition as land owners. However, this practice was soon halted, after the opening of the TBC between Bangladesh and DA.

Prior to the enclaves' integration in 2015, claims to validation of identities, assertions over resources and solicitations for social and spatial mobilities were negotiated amongst enclave residents themselves. In the absence of the state, local social capital networks had substantially alleviated the complexities of life within a space intersected by multiple limitations to access and mobility beyond its spatial confines. These networks were accessed through informal associations had facilitated contact with institutions of local governance, public distribution system, education, healthcare and institutions of financial management for the enclave residents. Additionally, they enhanced intra-enclave ties through the facilitation of provisions for corvée labour for the construction and maintenance of basic, local infrastructure such as dirt roads, bunds, embankments within enclaves, before their integration into their respective national spaces.

The *Chhitmohol Nagorik Samiti* or EPC was one such informal association constituted amongst inhabitants from several local enclaves subsequent to the independence of Bangladesh. It functioned as the unofficial liaison between the Indian state and the inhabitants of these enclaves, exercised through local, non-enclave proxies. Similar groups soon began to mushroom across the border in Bangladesh, functioning towards the same ends of local assimilation into the notional, national space and their immediate locale. These committees would provide enclave inhabitants with certificates of citizenship to the Indian enclaves they resided in, which was frequently used as official documentation at its nearest Land Entry Points, to secure access to India. These crossings were primarily carried out with the intention of resolving land-related issues, such as formalising sale before migration, which would often require a period of two to three days to complete. The Indian state's recognition of their capacity to provide authorisation to the enclave inhabitants was revoked in 1998, when these councils began to hand out fabricated certifications of citizenship to Bangladeshi citizens.

"There was no government here. No government official would pass through the enclave. They (non-enclave locals from adjacent Indian locales) would say that we are Indians and that Dahagram belongs to India. They knew that no one from India would also come here, because their government did not consider us a part of their country. We learnt to take care of ourselves. If there was any conflict, people from neighbouring villages would come to help resolve it. We could also enter India to access local markets by showing the cards issued by the Enclave Committee. But after they started issuing false cards, we were not allowed entry showing the same." (Field Interview, 10.11.2019)

In some enclaves, these local associations functioned as nodes of informal governance. In Bangladesh, their functions were modelled after the local *parishads*, and were in the same manner constituted through elections amongst the enclave residents. According to participant narratives, each committee would elect 10-12 members, whose responsibilities were distributed in accordance with the area of the DA enclave they came from. These divisions in authority and informally drawn out limits to these local associations' jurisdiction led to the emergence of local, rudimentary divisions of the enclave space into units referred to as *onchol* or local wards. Elections to seats in these Committees were contested chiefly amongst more affluent members of the DA locale, constituting the landed gentry. Its procedures were at times overseen by ex-officials from the adjacent, accessible local *parishads* to lend some semblance of legitimacy to their articulations of representation and local productions of formal administrative capacities. The participation of these ex-officials was therefore considered as a channel through which the constitutionality of their former positions in local administration could be transferred on to these local processes of governance. However, the novelty of these localised productions in substituting for state absence was often undercut by irregularities in the performance of their duties and their processes of selection were fraught with nepotistic tendencies towards distributing positions amongst the more socially and economically affluent sections of the enclave population.

"Every enclave resident would vote, except for women. At times they would bring people from outside to settle big disputes. Once they brought some officials from Patgram. But most of the time it engaged in repairing the boat yards or drawing water from the river by cutting channels

into ponds during summer. They would never engage in legal or security matters. Our well-being

was in our hands at the end of the day." (Field Interview, 10.11.2019)

One of the primary functions of these committees was to address interpersonal conflicts that periodically emerged amongst the enclave populaces. This process of *shalishi* (arbitration) constituted the principal responsibility of these associations. The most recurrent source of these disputes was land, and its associated conflicts of unresolved or ambiguous ownership, or settlement of claims, and issues surrounding forceful seizure during cycles of violence and subsequent displacements. Conflicts surrounding cattle were also frequently recounted by DA residents. The enclave which is situated along a smuggling route into Bangladesh, functioned as a pit-stop for cattle-runners, and residents would often lose their livestock to this illicit trade. Since their livestock was not insured by the mainland's registration mechanisms, it made them more prone to theft as the chances of tracing them to expedite a recovery was near impossible. However, through most of the year, these local councils would mobilise labour from within the enclave to construct and repair community assets such as bunds, wells, dirt roads, embankments and boatyards. Often, council members would raise funds by opening up these community facilities to other adjacent locales for a nominal sum. The money that was to be used for the maintenance and repair of such projects would eventually wind up in their coffers. The more affluent locals would often lease out their own lands or ferry-wharfs to other communities for the construction of such common facilities, instituting a system of exploitative subletting, whereby most of the revenue earned through the lessees' investments would be pilfered by the owners of these properties.

Frequently, enclave inhabitants would be subject to unwarranted harassment at the hands of state officials. Their statelessness, alongside their dependence upon cross-border mobilities and interactions made these populations as a means to bypass its associated deprivations, made these populations vulnerable to such reproaches. Residents would often be implicated in crimes that they were not guilty of because of having their crossing-over reported to the local authorities. Narratives from the field illustrate how someone from DA had to travel to Siliguri to receive emergency medical treatment, and upon their return, the men in the family were falsely booked under a cattle smuggling charge by the local, Indian subdivision's police. They had been jailed for three years and were only released upon the payment of an unofficial sum as bail money. There were other frequent retellings of similar accounts of arrests under false accusations and wrongful implications by the police of surrounding villages on the Indian side of the border. In most cases, these accusations remained uncontested due to the DA residents' lack of access to any form of state representation. These arbitrary and unsubstantiated arrests were often used by the local police forces to prop up their turnover rate with regard to unresolved complaints of cross-border smuggling, trafficking or theft. In such instances, district courts would be averse towards taking up such cases for deliberation given the institutional and jurisdictional complexities of addressing the complaints of stateless individuals. At the same time, this made it correspondingly problematic for the local police and law enforcement authorities to book any Indian citizen for crimes committed within the enclaves. The iniquitousness of these configurations would often result in heavy penalties and imprisonment for enclave inhabitants who were arrested for operating within these networks of local, grey economies alongside non-enclave locals.

The absence of legal mechanisms and state institutions to enforce laws and regulations gave rise to local, grey economies surrounding the illegal smuggling of cattle around these stateless enclaves. The proliferation of these networks occurred at the local level, and encompassed both enclave and non-enclave locales in its operation. In DA, houses situated close to the boundary with India would be used as stop-offs for cattle runners en route to Bangladesh. It is quite common to observe untagged cows being herded by individuals along these sparsely inhabited border routes at all times during the day. Local inhabitants typically stop them at different points of the route demanding money for passage through their villages. These trails are more active during the winter months due to dense fog that sets in at night, providing cover against detection. These networks encompass houses along different routes, usually controlled by an individual or a group engaged in smuggling cattle. The money that different levels of local actors engaged in this process make are proportionate to the risks involved in their respective roles. These networks were founded upon local trust and familiarity, between different local actors. The local spatial configuration of the space provided these grey economies concealment from the state, as often these networks would either operate out of enclaves, or even recede into deeper areas adjacent to these stateless spaces. Over time, these local networks have formalised into syndicates that control the trade, as the risks and necessary resources underlying their operation today have compounded significantly since the bilateral settlement of other outstanding border disputes. Ever since the integration of the enclaves, the trade entails greater risk, as houses situated in these stateless spaces have now been absorbed into national territory and therefore subjected to the same regulatory mechanisms as the surrounding locales. In the absence of any regulated and legal form of

employment that would afford these enclave residents a steady source of income, the propensity to depend upon such grey economies to secure the basic minimum level of subsistence was the only option available to them. The cultivation and sale of marijuana are also prevalent in these areas. Prior to integration, this constituted an additional source of income for the locals during the summer season.

"We wanted either India or Bangladesh to take us. To live without any law or rule was difficult. Nobody can live like that, even though people would say that without laws we were free and we could do whatever we pleased, but they did not think that meant that anybody else could do whatever they pleased to us as well."(Field Interview, 1.12.2019)

In contrast to representations of enclaves as 'criminal' spaces prior to their integration by the state, these grey economies were not exclusively contained within the borders of these erstwhile stateless spaces. However, prior to their integration their presence was more or less concentrated around these spaces given their sequestration from local authorities, but these engaged a wide range of local actors. However, unfairly, the suppositions of criminality continue to be extended towards these erstwhile stateless spaces and their inhabitants through past associations of enclaves as 'unsafe' spaces. The disentanglement of the local from the enclaves in such circumstances provides a partial view of local adaptations, which existed as collaborative circumventions of specific and common circumstantial challenges. The spatial diffusion of grey networks in and around these enclaves would therefore invite generalised aspersions of criminality upon its residents by local law enforcement authorities, as mentioned earlier. The absence of the state in this regard came to be equated with the absence of law and order. However, what is obscured in such explanations is the ability of the local to bypass shared deprivations

through a latticed network of interactions and exchanges, whose existence was founded upon existent networks of trust and dependence. This is indicative of the local's ability to cut through statist limits of interactions and exchanges instituted through its categorisations of identities and limitations to mobilities.

The residents of DA continue to face issues accessing state assistance, given their continuing territorial isolation from national centres of administration. The establishment of the TBC was to facilitate the provision of welfare to these communities which had existed in isolation from the state ever since its emergence in 1917. However, the development of civic infrastructure at the local level following the transfer of DA, according to local respondents, was left to the community's responsibility. The lack of assistance from the state led to no significant transformation in local conditions of life as residents continued to live without access to basic housing, healthcare and sanitation. Their isolation from state institutions continued despite their transfer to Bangladesh.

Similar to experiences on the Indian side of the border, DA continued to persist within its older enclaved existence, as its residents continued to navigate through the challenges of their continuing deprivations. Their ability to circumvent these limitations was significantly impeded by their distinct socio-spatial configuration. DA's encirclement by adjacent Indian locales during the height of bilateral tensions between India and Pakistan communalised and therefore limited the scope of the interactions that were shared across the enclave's borders. Unlike the enclaves on the Indian side of the border that were integrated into their immediate locales with which the inhabitants shared a common sense of national identification, DA's existence as a territorial extension of the Bangladeshi state into the Indian mainland complicates such configurations. The transfer of DA to

Bangladesh has resulted in a shift in the local perceptions surrounding the space, as past networks of association, and shared memories now stand fractured from the time the status of the enclave no longer remained undetermined. The local identification of DA as Bangladeshi territory has significantly altered patterns of interactions and perceptions held within adjacent Indian locales with which cross-border mobilities of DA residents still persist. This dislocation from the local spatiality and historiography has secluded DA furthermore from these older networks of support and collaborative action, thereby, in a manner similar to its Indian counterparts, re-enclaved its constitutive local.

Notions of Belonging, Possession, and Contested Local Identities in Dahagram-Angarpota

The emergence of a strong association with the Bangladeshi state amongst a majority of local residents of DA has textured their representations in the state's narratives as equal to the rest of the national population (van Schendel, 2002). Through the process of the bilateral negotiation of DA's final status, its resident communities were seeking to come to terms with the potential implications of their integration within the state's territory and frameworks of recognition on their lives and identities. The idea of trans-territoriality becomes pertinent in understanding how these understandings were shaped at the local level through various junctures of their interactions with state power. With both India and Bangladesh extending their claims over these stateless populations, positioning themselves as the guarantors of the rights that were due to them upon integration (Chaterjee 2004, p. 57), the local populations in the adjacent non-enclave localities began to give effect to these national assertions through the informal transference of these recognitions exercised through their settled identities, in the interim.

These local transferences of recognition, rights and duties were often extended or accessed along communal lines, as a consequence of the emergence of DA as a local site of conflict and its setting within the larger courses of regional historiography. Local perceptions of the self and the other were also shaped accordingly by such delimited extensions. The national production of the enclave space further complicated such equations of binarising the self and the other, given their relative location to a contentious international border. (Aggarwal & Bhan, 2009).

However, despite such divergences, the lived experiences of its inhabitant communities, captured in the historicity of their interactions with the state and other local actors, renders any assumption of the absolutism of their statelessness questionable. Despite their shared nature of existence, the impact of national narratives, nationalisms and conflicts at times disrupted, or fundamentally altered negotiations between the erstwhile stateless enclaves and their adjacent locales. In the context of DA, the causes of these shifts can be traced to a population which was split between Hindus and Muslims, mirroring localised and state nationalisms that emerged as a consequence of the historical antagonisms and conflicts between India and Pakistan. These local associations with trans-territorial nationalisms only sought to alienate enclave residents from one another. The shared sense of exclusion amongst the enclave's residents came to be divided on the basis of their religious identity, underscored by the discordant narratives causal to their localised manifestation as conflicts in the enclaves and proximate sites.

The DA conflict highlights this very conundrum of identification, whereby individuals were separated in their fidelity towards the two antagonistic nationalisms of India and Pakistan. Even though participant narratives engaged with by the study indicate a

delineation of such identities and its subsequent communal affiliations, interestingly, the identity of the enclave resident which in interactions cut through these other appellations continues to persist even today, albeit in altered forms. It appears as though, the imposition of religious and cultural incongruities at the local level, through extended linkages to the 'homeland', did not result in a reduction to the restrictions to mobilities that the enclave inhabitants faced as stateless communities. This assertion can be evidenced by the exploration of the residual, localised impacts of their isolation which the study has engaged with, which explores the impacts of their segregation from their immediate locale despite these extended associations to the space and its peoples.

The consequences of their local isolation with this was that even though the insertion of the states into this situation gave the enclave residents the avenue to identify as citizens, it came at the cost of alienation from their immediate social milieu and the enclave space, depending upon its location in relation to the border.

An exploration of the local conflict at DA brings to light the instabilities that underlined the life of its inhabitants prior to its transfer to Bangladesh. The absolutism underlying statist classifications of statelessness obscures localised understandings of belonging and possession existing within DA. These perceptions were polyvalent and rooted in transience, rendering the possibility of uprooting or displacement a common anxiety through which personal acuities of stability were fashioned. The idea of DA itself is also rooted in analogous transience, whereby prevalent understandings of national belonging derived from and indexed by the larger bilateral conflicts over territory, determined the habitability of the enclave for certain categories of residents; with the impacts of such transmutations resonating across the locale even today. In viewing issues originating

from such peripheral spaces through broad-stroke categorisations of belonging and stable identities, the specificities of local framings of their own adaptations, perceptions and conflicts are excluded from consideration. The reliance of statist apperceptions to understand the machinations of borderland conflicts and its underlying local perceptions limits extant potentials to understand the complexities underlying the variability of the condition itself, both in the presence or absence of the state; and how its local inhabitants through their interactions claim rights and identifications which operate within the confines of their shared immediate socio-spatial existences (Laine, 2016, p. 468).

The understandings of belonging that were frequently articulated by the residents of DA can be viewed to be based on a dual association with their state and their immediate social milieu, with ascriptions remaining more or less interchangeable, and contingent upon the circumstances of their assignation. Furthermore, residents recurrently underscored in their accounts the transience that marked life in a contested space like DA, wherein perceptions of rootedness to a space of dwelling were transferred to the objects and memories they carried with them during upsurges in local cycles of violence, around which the notion of a home was fashioned. The local conflicts which resulted in displacements from within the enclave had also resulted in the emergence of understandings of ownership that were grounded upon ideas of possession which were not premised on considerations of provenance, but on the dispossession of another. The absence of any prior identification with the state has evinced the emergence of more localised understandings of belonging and ownership, the perceptions and processes of which were shaped by the interactions between the inhabitants of DA and its adjacent locales. This can be evidenced by the prevalence of one's setting within an erstwhile

enclave or a particular village as their primary point of identification, which lends added layers to the perception of local dynamics beyond the conventional viewing of these inhabitants as citizens of the state. This obscures the impacts of their isolation on their newly acquired identities, which can provide key insights to understanding the multiplicity of its interpretations and usages at the local level.

The idea of DA currently existing as a part of Bangladeshi territory within India holds symbolic significance in understanding how ideas of nation, state and territory are often complicated in their operation beyond the realm of theoretical articulation. The divergences that exist between conceptualisation and operation are often rendered through its interactions with the local, which engages with such concepts, through the progressions of their local life-cycles, in ways, changing the manner in which the same is understood and subsequently, practicalised by state power. The negotiations, adaptations and transformations that underwrite life in liminal and peripheral spaces are multifarious, in how they interact with the state and its imposed limitations and manufactured differences. The variability of its manifestations at the local level brings forth key insights into how its structuration of power shapes and are shaped by national discernments and perceptions of conflicts, their settings and participating actors. Local narratives frequently recounted this overlap between national and local struggles that were prevalent during this period. Local conflicts that mirrored prevalent narratives of differentiation were mobilised around the central issue of claiming DA as either Indian or Bangladeshi territory, despite the underlying justificatory frameworks of such assertions remaining rooted exclusively to local considerations.

After the Partition of 1947, which transformed the local *chhitmohols* into state enclaves, markers of distinction previously absent (van Schendel, 2005, p. 46), began to emerge at the local level, which segregated localised acuities of the inhabitants of DA from those of its neighbouring locales. It was only after the Partition that these areas became enclaved by the territories of foreign dominions. Since then, older local boundaries and traditional jurisdictions of erstwhile states[72] and local authority were erased by the establishment of the postcolonial border and the subsequent regulations and separations it brought forth at the local level and in the national imagination. The Partition, therefore, cemented the stateless identities of the enclave residents of DA in a manner such that the boundaries of their dwellings came to be formalised and impressed upon perceptions of local spatiality. As a consequence, the residents of DA could no longer ascribe to older configurations of local identities established through their history of interactions. Their subsequent insertion into pre-set categories of the 'other', fractured local networks of interdependence, and also led to their separation from reconfigured perceptions of local spatiality.

The socio-political dynamics underlying these local struggles complicated the practicalisation of the bilateral transfer of DA from India to Bangladesh. The state's fundamental necessity for defining the limits of its sovereignty, and for securing and policing its borders, was convoluted by the incidence of local struggles along communal lines, on issues of access to markets and other local spaces. This case study of DA responds to the extant need to investigate the interdependencies and engagements between the national and local histories of struggles over asserting control over space and

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[72] Referring to the transformations in the enclaves that emerged through the transitions in associations with the Princely State of Cooch-Behar, the British Colonial State, and finally with the postcolonial state.

territory within a particular region (Paasi, 2013). The polarities present between the unbending legalistic structures of the state and the transient, local efforts for establishing portability and exchanges of individuals from either side of the border; has manifested through the reconfigurations of this valency through demonstrations of changeability and adaptability at the borderland. Likewise, the understanding of the borderland as held by groups and individuals inhabiting the space emerge as important junctures of inquiry to understand their absence or marginalisation within statist designs of spatiality and power operating in these liminal zones (Dittmer & Gray, 2010). The location of the border and national leitmotifs of belonging and membership dictate the perceptions of borderland identities, and also the manner of their categorisation under the state's schematic of belonging. The propensity to categorise becomes more obvious from the incongruences that emerge when such processes fail to negotiate the varying contestations of identities emanating from the specificities of geographical location, the specific locale setting as well as the position of individuals and communities in relation to the border and the state (Das 2003; Samaddar 1998; van Schendel 2005; Banerjee 2010). As this case study on DA's history of adaptations, disruptions and continuities have brought forth the impacts of such essentialisms on the local production of conflict. Additionally, the identities cemented under such essentialised categorisations consistently leave open the possibility of sparking off violence, mistreatment and otherisation in localised cycles of conflict, while at the same time fomenting cooperative transformations that operate outside realms of state legality, between groups separated by the state's border.

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Chapter 5

Situating the Local in Bilateralism: Reconfiguring Normative Conceptions of National, Bilateral and Local

Reengaging with Bilateralism

The existing literature on bilateral relations essentially outlines it as a mechanism through which two countries seek to actualise their individual national interests, on the basis of collaborative action on select issues. Bilateral relationships can take various forms. They can range from singular, comprehensive agreements between the signatory states to ones specifying the intent to cooperate on multiple spheres undergirded by the potential for interactions (Smith & Tsatsas, 2002, p. 29). Therefore a precondition towards the emergence of conditions facilitating co-action is the presence of potential issues or scope for collaborative engagement between two actors. More often than not, the selection of issues/areas of cooperation is based on the states' identification of their respective capability/resource gaps which they seek to address/fulfil through co-action. At the same time, a continuing history of cooperation on more significant aspects of state action may pave the way for collaboration on softer issues based around the recognition or preservation of historical and cultural solidarities, common positions on international or regional issues, aid towards promoting social welfare; to mark out a few possible iterations.

The concept of bilateralism however is often muddled in its usage and therefore needs to be distinguished from its applied interchangeability with bilateral relations in general phraseology. Therefore at the outset, it must be specified that this study engages with the definition of bilateralism as the organising principle of bilateral relations. Therefore it is a conceptual framework on which agreements between states are constituted and established. Bilateral relations, on the other hand, can be understood from a 'formal or nominal' perspective based on considerations of number of states party to a formal agreement (Pasvolsky, 1936). Or, as a mechanism of coordinating national policies, which offers a 'substantive' or 'qualitative' classification, analogous to Keohane's (1990) characterisation of multilateralism[73].

Bilateralism is co-dependent on its production of stability within both the regional and global systems. Regional stability ensures that an actor's strides towards growth and development are not impeded by any disruptive circumstances prevalent or potentially emergent in its immediate sphere of operation. The scope for disruptive behaviour is, to an extent, averted by conditions of interdependency that bilateralism establishes. The same equivalence can be extended to the conceptualisation of the international system which in its contemporary phases is constituted of a complex matrix of interactions and interdependencies. To understand the emergence of regional and general systemic stability at the global level, the implications of instability and uncertainty can be engaged

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[73] Keohane sought to understand the processes underlying institutionalised multilateral cooperation in world politics. His research provides key insights into understanding the conditions under which states within a globalised system are willing to share their authority through and within multilateral agreements and institutions. Keohane's analysis helped in developing interpretive frameworks to address these issues through a qualitative research design, which contest the normative underpinnings of institutional accountability and state legitimacy. For a more detailed reading, refer to 'Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research' (1990).

with to understand the impetus it provides towards the alignment of states in cooperative frameworks of action. However, the inherent asymmetries of power that exist between states, determined by their relative military, economic and technological capabilities, as well as the specific configurations of their shared trade relations (Icardo, 1981, p. 28) throws up complications to the logics of this argument. To counter this analytical obstruction, a deeper insight into the variances in the operation of these configurations reveals patterns of alignment or bandwagoning with commonly held interests which offset the concentration of power in a few spheres. The self-regulatory capacities of the world system therefore emerges from the exigencies underlying interactions between its constituent states, which contests logical essentialisms of power concentration by functioning as an intrinsic check on its expropriation amongst a few states.

A formal agreement inhibits self-seeking behaviour amongst its signatories. Since no state can be completely self-reliant, bilateralism or other arrangements of inter-state alliances function as stabilising factors within and across regions. The unilateral action of its signatory states with other analogous actors, situated within and outside an existing agreement's framework, is textured by considerations of preservation and inviolability of the terms of these pre-existing collaborations. Consequently, the possibility to potentially destabilise the conditions regional or international ordering as a consequence of unpredictable choice-making, therefore comes to be mitigated by bilateral and multilateral considerations. In acting within the established conditions of an agreement, states tend to remain deferential to the other's authority and national interests, both in the capacity of a partner to an agreement, and as self-regulating actors. Considering these arguments, a formal agreement between states may be viewed as a regulatory mechanism

that adjusts against the compulsions of unregulated decision making in an interconnected system, in a manner that is conjointly agreeable and mutually beneficial for the signatory parties instituting an agreement or an institution of collaborative action. The aforementioned conditions can be applicable in understanding the implications of bilateral agreements at a regional level.

A bilateral relationship may also emerge as an outcome of pre-emption on part of states towards maximising individual benefits or advantages within a region. The presence of one such association may act as the springboard on which similar configurations may emerge to mitigate the likelihood of power concentration. Depending on prevailing circumstances and the relative capabilities of actors, their choices might range from association with existent groupings or balancing their presence through the formation of similar groupings. The deemphasising of geographical contiguity in a globalised context has further enabled states to seek out alliances beyond their immediate neighbourhood. As a result, the possibilities of cooperation are not limited by conditions of spatial proximity (Starr & Thomas 2005, p. 125). This ensures that alliances are never stagnant, since actors are continually engaged in updating the conditionality of their interactions, based upon considerations of the relative and changeable positions of their associates in regional and extra-regional affairs. Based upon this, the scope and limitations of pre-existing and prospective agreements are clarified and/or established. Historical relations, geographical proximity, the convergence of national interests, similarities in the organisation of governance, leadership, political culture and an underpinning of amicable inter-state relations have all been categorised as key requisites for successful bilateral relations (Smith & Tsatsas, 2002, p. 30). Over time, the significance of geographical

contiguity and proximity has dwindled, as states seek to establish new agreements or join existing ones beyond their immediate regions.

Bilateralism, in such conceptualisations, appears to be based fundamentally on considerations of national interest, as the unit of its analysis remains confined to the state. This exposes a gap when understanding the process through which states address local conflicts, as national interest, through a bilateral framework. The articulation of what constitutes an immediate interest remains under the exclusive purview of the state, which subsequently determines the representation of a local issue, as one encompassing the preservation of national interests. This prompts questions surrounding the position and representation of the 'local' and 'local interests' which constitute the actorial and spatial landscapes upon which national or bilateral intercession is realised. The study brings forth an understanding of the impacts of bilateralism at the local levels, and how the perceptions of bilateral conflict at these subjacent levels impact upon relations between states. It selects local conflicts as the point of inquiry, given the prevalence of the state(s) in such manifestations, in its attempts to preserve its foundational principles that constitute the basis of identifying its national interests. The study brings forth a reconfigured understanding of bilateralism; by introducing a new level of analysis, that is, the local, and accordingly adjusts its perceptions of the scale of operation of such agreements, the scope of their implementation and impacts, and the representation of socio-spatial specificities in the determination of underlying interests guiding the need for intercession.

In the conventional explications on bilateralism, presented at the outset of this section, it becomes apparent that the dissociation of the contingencies of the spatial and actorial

settings constituting the local upon which these directives are operationalised, exposes the detachment of the local interests from its larger, national interpretations. The extension of specific interests and demands to abstractions and essentialisms denudes the intrinsic variability underlying these socio-spatial configurations, and how their specific positionality in relation to the state and its discourses textures their interactions with the implementation of such agreements of bilateral frameworks. In introducing the local, as a unit of engagement for bilateralism, necessitates a reconfiguration of other underlying conceptualisations it rests upon, and its associated logics of practicalisation. Therefore, a reconfiguration of bilateralism will be contingent upon a revised understanding of national interests, and the intellections underlying their discernment, and subsequently the conditions that guide bilateral state action carried out on the basis of such perceptions. The study therefore posits an alternative framework towards understanding bilateralism, based on an engagement with the local and its interests, which becomes necessary in critically inquiring into the localised impacts of past and concurrent bilateral mediations and its claimed success in assuaging common concerns.

Cycles of Convergence of National Interest

The study bases its conclusive arguments on the premise that bilateral relations comes to practicalised around considerations of the respective national interests[74] of

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[74] The role of domestic politics constitutes a fault line within Realist thought. Both classical realists and neorealists underemphasise its implications. However, in such expositions, continuities in the nature of inter-state interactions or dissociated unilateral actions could not be substantiated by explanations rooted in particularistic dispositions of specific state structurations. The Realists have therefore categorically segregated the prevalence of the organisational principles of hierarchical arrangement within states from any relation to conditions of anarchy the theory overlays on the nature of organisation of states in the international order. Thereby categorising them as two contrasting and separable means by which the organisation of space and power is presumably carried out. The Realist line of thought has attempted to address this caveat by trying to equate the influence of national factors in conceptualising decision-

prospective signatories to a formal agreement. The primacy accorded to 'national issues' as the driving force of bilateral relations can be attributed to the manner in which state-centric Realist discourses[75] have underscored prevalent understandings and applications of the same concept. As a consequence, issues considered to be operating at the level of the 'local' are often left out from the purview of such interactions, unless they are perceived to have certain direct implications on the realisation of a state's national interest objectives. With regard to the specific case researched by the study, the Land Boundary Agreement signed between India and Bangladesh; it is observed that the process through which its underlying common issues were sought to be settled went through multiple national and bilateral iterations in locating the focus of mediation, and an assessment of the interests at stake, through which the bilateral agreement emerged in the form in which it came to be ratified. The specific reasons behind the failure of preceding iterations of the agreement have been dealt with in detail by the study, identifying the impacts of changing regional and global systems upon the final resolution of the enclave dispute.

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making process to root concepts such as the security dilemma and coalition formation in realities that are operational at the domestic level, but still such inclusions remain superficial.

[75] Political realism is arguably the most dominant and canonical theory of the field of international relations. Even though this frame of analysis came to be employed with enhanced dynamism in the post-war period and what could well be called the death of the liberal tradition; its core theoretical foundations are much older. The Realists' principally emphasise on the primacy of military conflict as a major force in shaping border realities and discourses on security. Within academia, political realism attained primacy after the Second World War and the concomitant rise of the United States of America as a major political and military superpower. The modern conceptualisation of realism was the product of this newly acquired balance that had been forged out of the two World Wars; and its tenets found articulation. Despite such differences, the central tenets of classical realism – statism, survival and self-preservation – pervade and inextricably link these distinct strands of thought together. (Dunne & Schmidt, 2001, p. 150-155).

At a deeper level, this research, based upon the premise it establishes, argues that such dissonances at the level of achieving equivalence of policy and projected outcomes is a direct outcome of incongruities at the level of national interests of both states. If one examines the conditions which eventually lead to the alignment of interests of both countries with regard to the scope of the LBA, one can precisely locate the temporal point at which there emerges a convergence of their respective national interests. This is not to say that this convergence is absolute in any manner whatsoever, as the possibility of that is often miniscule given the variability of desired outcomes that are pursued by states. Although such variability is often offset by the existence of states within the same geographical zone, conditioned by an analogous reality of limitations and opportunities, the possibility of an absolute convergence remains contingent upon the alignment of several supporting conditions which may not be practically conceivable in international relations. Similarly, as the number of states party to an agreement increases in number, the possibility of a convergence of interests becomes less likely.

Given the multiple conditions underlying the possibility of a total convergence of interests, its closest possible realisation can be considered in a situation wherein the national interests of the respective states achieve the closest conceivable equivalence either as a consequence of their alignment over time or as a result of the emergence of a conducive environment shaped by certain extant circumstances. In the case of the LBA, it could be stated that interest convergence at a bilateral level was achieved by a combination of both aforementioned conditions at varying degrees and levels, eventually culminating in its ratification in 2015. The historical circumstances of the shared border between India and Bangladesh, and its associated problems and conflicts deterred both

states from extending their respective programmes for integration beyond their immediate, South Asian regionscape. Overcoming these limitations provided a strong impetus for cooperation on their shared unsettled bilateral disputes surrounding the common border, in an effort to establish conditions that would be conducive towards the pursuit of their independent national interests. Similarly, if one examines the outcome of the ratification of the LBA on the national and public perceptions within India, it drew credit for the incumbent government in resolving an outstanding conflict that dates back to 1971. Similarly, it also ushered in a period of stability in Indo-Bangladesh relations which had for a long time suffered through periods of indecisiveness and hostility following the growing incidences of cross-border trafficking, unmitigated illegal migration and issues of water sharing, which continue to remain unresolved at a bilateral level even today. In contrast, the LBA of 2015 came to be heralded as a success, given that it resolved a very significant, bilateral dispute, at their respective national levels of perception. Notwithstanding the local impacts of the resolution process, which lay bare such proclamations of complete resolution, the LBA continues to be studied as an instance of successful bilateral cooperation in South Asia.

Cycles of convergence of interests between states are not unlikely, however at the same time there is no fixed way of determining what likely combination of factors, whether internal or external, will lead to the emergence of the same. This is so, primarily because both the international realm and the regionscape are dynamic spaces upon which the interests and relations between states are constituted, modified and actualised (Axelrod, 1984). However, one can always adopt an approach that is contingent and time-bound so as to hold in frame the circumstances that were conducive to particular convergence

cycles. The predictive capacity of such frameworks will frequently vary, but can be determined. An analysis of preceding cycles between two actors can educe certain patterns of the interaction and emergence of factors underlying instances of successful convergences, as well as those that fell short of an actualisation of convergence, through which critical insights into the particularistic perceptions of interests upon which states interact, can be brought forth. As pertaining to the context of the study, the conditions that delayed the process of agreement through the course of its cycle can be traced to issues related to – mismatched understandings of what encompassed a preferable solution for both states, delays in the legislative processes of amendment and ratification, the mobilisation of issues of territorial loss and unmitigated migration as political capital; as well as the role played by local actors whose immediate spaces of habitation, existing mobilities, and relationships stood to be altered as an outcome of the decision. These factors were all significant impediments which arose at different points in the timeline of the resolution process, at both the national and local levels of articulation and production. However, with the coming to power of a new government in India, and the issue of regional and extra-regional integration emerging as a necessary prerequisite of development in both countries, one can plot out the shifts in perceptions of national interests over time that eventually led to its convergence on the issue of the transfer of enclaves between India and Bangladesh.

It must be stated that convergences do not necessarily imply the emergence of common interests, but of conditions that provide a common ground for states involved to seek out the actualisation of their national goals and objectives through collaboration. The element of collaboration tends to ease expectations as well, as interests often come to be tempered

by the realities of compromise and modification that an actor may encounter in the process of its actualisation; and consequently reconfigure the same in a manner that could presumably accommodate similar goals and interests held by other countries,, or in this case bilateral cooperation in an effort to resolve common issues and conflicts. Collaboration tends to ease the pressure on individual actors by prompting them to work within a framework where the onus of finding a solution or a way forward, as the case may be, is not completely dependent upon one actor. Therefore, if this premise is applied to the specific case study of the LBA, its failed attempts at ratification emerge not as a failure of an individual state, but of the bilateral process as a whole.

The impact of delays in the process of interest convergence often leads to the persistence and progression in the circumstantial conditions of the local conflicts underlying the issue it seeks to address. The progressions through which such a convergence takes place is simultaneously accompanied by the transformations in the narratives associated with the conflicts both at the level of the state and the local, and its manifestations at the sites of conflict. Frequently, the reasons accompanying the lack of a convergence of national interest cycles may elicit narratives of incongruities in expectations and outcomes between the negotiating actors, and underlining the irreconcilability of their interests. The breakdown of dialogue in working towards a probable solution often boils down to shifts in the internal structuration of interests of the participant actors, or larger systemic changes in the regional or global order. As a consequence, perceptions and narratives underlying a conflict can undergo significant transformations during periods of bilateral inaction or collapse, and tend to return to their particularistic or essentialised perusals in national and localised manifestations. Subsequently, the underlying local conflicts such

bilateral processes seek to address continue to operate and can also often evolve into different variants from its original form as an impact of the transformations in its national perceptions.

Local Impacts of National Interest-based Resolution

The tendency to view resolution as a positive process and a precursor to establishing conditions conducive for accommodation of differences is contentious. Such understandings disregard the need to understand the term as contingent to its specific context of operation and therefore transient in nature requiring continuing interventions and negotiations, and therefore there emerges a need to deconstruct the ideological presuppositions it might carry. The prioritising of reconciliation as the most preferable form of conflict management needs to be brought under a critical view in order to recognise that as a process it is not universally applicable or viable across different scenarios. Generalised forms of resolution tend to obscure the varying perceptions that operate within and shape a conflict in its localised manifestations. In attempting to reconcile the multiple narratives underlying a conflict, such approaches can inversely contribute towards its prolongation (Drexler, 2007); and therefore reflects a normative understanding of what resolution as a process ought to entail. These deductions overlap the idea of resolution with normativities of repair and compensation of any injustice perpetrated, resumption of pre-conflict relations and interactions, inter-communal and moral perspectives of human rights and community building (Little, 2012). Such limited renderings can often fail at encapsulating the realities underlying certain situations to determine the necessities and means of its intervention.

The multiplicative capacities of reconciliation in furthering local conflict become more probable in a scenario where it the conflict itself sustained by the presence of multiple disjunctured narratives (Little, 2012). These narrativised perceptions are created and sustained through a co-dependence with alternative and often conflicting readings of the situation at hand that exist at the levels of national perception and local manifestation. The efficacy and scope of reconciliation therefore becomes rigidly tied to its linguistic expression and the extent to which it either reflects or destabilise existing social divisions or other contributing factors underlying a particular conflict. As a result, policies of resolution are transformed into ideologising trappings, as opposed to empirically ordered and organised processes aimed at the amelioration of social and political disagreements (Drexler, 2007) at different levels of their manifestation. Instead, a critically poised approach to understanding reconciliation as part of the life cycle of a conflict, and a probable gateway into the establishment of a post-conflict society can be engaged with as an alternative means to intervention. The challenge is to avoid the usage of abstract concepts to address real, complex socio-political phenomenon. Conceptual reconfigurations need to establish situationally contingent ideas of resolution which views it as a part of the life cycle of a conflict, emphasising the need for its constant re-evaluation and reconfiguration in the context of a post-conflict space; as part of a larger effort to open it up to the possibility of the establishment of an enduring peace at the local levels. Therefore, in the interim, the scope of the term needs to be contingent only to the particular causes of the original conflict which its policies and interventions address.

The construal of locally operating conflicts at the national level often appears to be dissociated from its ground realities. Accordingly, solutions in the form of mechanisms or

frameworks for settlement tend to be guided by states' analysis of what constitutes the fundamental reasons contributing to the persistence of a particular conflict. Factors contributing to the conflict are assessed in terms of their potential effects on the execution of its national interest objectives (Schmidt, 1990). With regard to the India-Bangladesh border and the previously undetermined status of its enclaves, the local narrative barely featured in policies, strategies and agreements that culminated in the form of a final 'resolution'. The socio-spatial configurations of the local were restricted to being viewed as passive recipients of state policy. The absence of discussions on the issues of identity, and association (both territorial and notional), and whether there exists a separate 'enclave identity' (van Schendel, 2002) amongst the enclave inhabitants, built upon a collective consciousness of their unique situation and lived experiences, within the larger bilateral discourse on this issue, points towards the lack of inclusion of local voices and opinions in determining the final status of these spaces and its inhabitants in the processes applied towards their bilateral exchange.

Today, even after more than five years since the implementation of the LBA, a new array of complications has arisen in these former enclave spaces. The emergence of local concerns over persistent issues whose emergence can be traced to the erstwhile statelessness of these spaces and its resident populations and subsequently their restricted integration, leads one to question whether 'resolution' construed on terms of national interests at all leads to the establishment of stability in conflict settings, regardless of whether such conflicts are latent or manifest. It can be argued that myopic, national interest oriented policies in this case, only addressed the most apparent causal factors underlying the issue. However, to claim that the same has resulted in the

recommencement of normality in these spaces, neglects the need to address other, obscured details contributing to the persistence of the conflict at a dormant level in these locales. General approaches towards the resolution of the enclave issue addressed only the ostensible causative factors of the conflict which did not result in the termination of the conflict, but expedited shifts in its localised forms. In terms of the scope of its operation it has become more limited and locally contained since their integration in 2015, with the elimination of any uncertainty regarding the final status of these spaces with regard to the territorial claims exercised over the enclaves by India and Bangladesh. Additionally transference of local claims under more formalised processes of interest aggregation and articulation as a result of the proliferation of political parties and state institutions in these newly integrated electorates, have also resulted in their extrication from embedded local processes of stabilisation. These two transformations at the local level were considered to be adequate indicators of the attainment of the bilateral agreements policies towards resolving the unresolved enclave dispute at their respective national levels.

Even though the central concerns of integration of these erstwhile stateless spaces was realised; the policies constructed towards the attainment of this objective failed to account for other issues which have since manifested in the form of new complications in these local spaces. Consequently, even after the adoption of 'official' measures towards the integration of these enclaves into the sovereign space of a nation state, these steps have been confined to addressing the bilateral enclave issue at a territorial level alone. Failure to assimilate the inhabitants of these former enclaves into the national space of their respective territories is clearly elucidated when one examines the nature of struggles

they face in their daily interactions with the nation state in their struggles at the local levels to procure basic rights and constitutional identifications that come with citizenship. Therefore, even after official steps towards the integration of these hitherto isolated spaces, they still exist as enclaves today, although the nature of their isolation is deeper than their erstwhile separation from the state. Today, even while constituting a part of the state, they remain enclaved by the weight of their history of isolation, which emerges in the form of locally embedded exclusions and inequalities that have prevented the inhabitants of these spaces from achieving parity with the remaining local populaces.

Problematique of Local Exclusionism and Implications on Conflict Resolution Processes

The locus of the outlined debate can be identified to exist at the level of identifying what actually constitutes the subject of study in International Relations. Without doubt the consensus of academic or popular focus more often than not rests on the 'national'. That being said, insights as to what constitutes the national have seldom been asked. The abstraction that embodies the national is somehow sought to be rectified by merging it with the more tangible concept of national interest; the execution of which lends some form of materiality to the construct. The implementation of these national interests, through observable actions, bear material outcomes that may play out at the national levels, for instance, in the form of growing cooperation amongst regional actors, and at the local level, such as in the form of impacts created by more stringent immigration policies (Faasin, 2011). Thus, questions aimed at understanding the national have never been answered without falling back on conceptualisations based on the interests it embodies.

However, as a concept, national interest remains rooted in values. Policy objectives which are used as a marker for constructing the idea of the national are organised in accordance with the projected notion of what constitutes national interest, without clearly emphasising upon what constitutes the 'national' itself. As a result, these 'national' interests are constructed as a singular objective truth, dovetailed into a larger discourse of what constitutes the national, undercut by its own structurations of power and authority. This monolithic perception of national policy is problematic since national interest as a construct can never be static, but subject to change with regard to the changing circumstances in the international and the domestic realms of the state's existence. Therefore, the misrepresentation of identified political goals as related to the larger discourse of national interest and the nation needs to be substituted by a more accurate and realistic understanding of goals as national interest. Thereby dissociating the state from its approximated abstract conceptualisation and ascribing intentionality of action to the individuals and collectives that constitute it. Therefore the idea is to problematise the assumptions that 'speaking for the state' and 'representing the national' entail. Such aforementioned propensities tend to be based on inductive claims of logic in which the only possible way to determine what people need and want is to assume that their requirements and aspirations are reflected in the actions of the nation's policy makers.

Conflicts, which have tenable substantial currency in the study of International Relations have been also been subjected to similar readings, whereby they are interpreted in terms of number of casualties, number of refugees generated, policies of containment and domestic response to the same. This approach views complex social phenomena from a perspective which scarcely accounts for the disjuncture in narratives and positionalities

and differences in conflict perceptions that operate at the national and local levels. At this point, questions regarding what or who comprises the national level arise; the answers to which, like any other opinion or statement will reveal upon deconstruction, subjectivities tied to one's socio-cultural identity, political affiliations, economic standing, and ideological bearings. Therefore, the singularity and objectiveness of the state's representation in International Relations discourses needs to be challenged, given the variability that is evinced in its localised perceptions. By extension, the ability of a state to singularly condense multiple strands of interest can also be challenged. Such discourses represent far more than the words that constitute them, they also contain naturalisations of logic and categorisation, which when unearthed expose that certain stable and neutral ontological categories are in fact not so neutral and stable after all. Over time, with usage, discourse tends to inform social action and social practice, and becomes the very means by which reality comes to be constituted rather than the means through which reality may be viewed.

Given the inadequacies in representations of issues that national-interest driven resolution policies drive forth, there is an emergent need for harnessing the experiences of the local as a key point of reference. This is with regard to the two pronged necessity of not only understanding the localised impacts of the presence of conflict situations, but also in comprehending the adaptations made by the local in subverting, acclimating and changing its extant circumstances which may figure in the form of limitations or facilitations to pre-existent ways of life. The study elucidates the need for reconfiguring our understandings of resolution processes, and states that the effort must be predicated on a reassessment of conflicts which engages with its underlying subjectivities. The site

of the border can often constitute the grounds for the suspension of normal life cycles in case of the emergence of circumstances which may be interpreted by the state as a conflict. The unimpeded authority of the state in securitising its borders has often been the precondition for such suspensions of normality. However, when one enquires into the local narratives emergent from the same space, the perception that emerges is one of adaptations and subversions in response to such interruptions (Dittmer & Gray, 2010).

Additionally, the meanings and implications of borders and boundaries vary according to the positionality of the subjects constituting the space. Considerations which determine the engagement of certain groups with the state are impacted upon by the several relationalities underlying their setting within their immediate locales. Perceptions of circumstances as conflicts or as being disruptive to considerations of 'normal' life are often carried by communities located away from the sites of the manifestation of these conditions. For within the immediate setting of a conflict, these circumstances entail a different set of opportunities and potentials. This becomes all the more apparent at the border whereby local adaptive capacities are often at full display in negotiating the changing circumstances of their lives, mediated by the state and its variable policies towards the management of these space and inhabitant communities. These shifts are reflected in the incorporation of varied local perspectives and alternative points of reference in understanding the processes and relationships that the existence of these spaces entail, contain and also originate. At this juncture, the concept of the borderscape assumes significance, in defining the space in a manner that not only transcends statist territorial epistemologies and processual renderings, in understanding borders as sites where alternative comprehensions of identity, citizenship and otherness are effected

through processes of localised reconfigurations in response to the state's presence (Chatterjee et al., 2021). In this context, the idea of the local, not only at the borders, but at different existences of spatial disaggregation emerges as a relevant point of engagement (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007, p. x).

The local can therefore be understood as an alternative spatial category that exists within a continuum of adaptation, accommodation and contestation with statist, geopolitical control over space, not only confined to peripheral and marginal spaces. In the context of this enquiry, it would be prudent to view the 'local' as a spatially contained socio-political category which encompasses similar roles and performances to that of the state, but whose existence and functioning are attuned to the specific requirements of a particular socio-spatial configurations embedded within existent statist frameworks and categorisations of space, identity and permissible actions and mobilities (Chatterjee et al., 2021). In introducing the local as a referent for engagement in analysis of borderland perceptions, it positions the socio-spatial category as one that is not static, but determined by the subjectivities underlying the varying degrees and natures of quotidian engagement with the space and the various epistemic systems which undergird its production. In adopting this framework, the local retains its inherent mutability as represented by the multitude of actorial strategies evinced by those seeking to navigate through its consequent economic, social and political opportunities and potentials (Brambilla, 2015, p. 26).

In attributing an active identity to the borderland local, processes of state intercession must begin to take cognisance of the impact it has upon this space. At the same time, reconfigure its determination of conflicts beyond apperceptions of the experiential and

perceived disruptions of its authority or presence. The fungible nature of existence at the states' limits has often constituted the basis upon which numerous localised adaptations are produced, not only in responding to crises but also to new limitations, or regulations imposed by the state as an active part of its policies on spatial management and even conflict resolution. The historicity underlying such adaptations should constitute the starting point whereby local capacities towards surpassing conditions of conflict should be qualified. The processes and frameworks dictating interactions and interpellations at the local level may very well constitute the grounds upon which the state's policies can be formed. Thereby, instead of replacing such localised frameworks of resolution, intervention and support, the state could seek to reinforce the same through the recognition of the local template of interactions which has proven its functionality and effectiveness with regard to the management of its existential circumstances. In this regard, the borderland local should not be viewed as an entirely separate categorisation that exists independent of the state, with its primary ethos of existence being rooted in the subversion of the state. State processes of intercession have given rise to localised tendencies whereby such frameworks have been both reinforced and traversed, thereby establishing a more contextual translation of the limiting nature of such intermediations which come to be textured by local interactions and experiences. Therefore, the adaptability of the borderland local may not be viewed as subversive; that is, from a deleterious perspective of interpretation. A suitable alternative interpretation would be viewing the same as localised attempts to integrate within forms and frameworks of governance emergent at that level, by adapting the same to the exigencies of their realities and circumstances. Although such practices are commonplace in our everyday

interaction with forms of governance, at the borders the same are often prone to representation as being inherently dissident processes (Hansen, 2009, p. 347-48), mainly so because of the priority accorded to the maintenance of the salient and unqualified position of the state at its limits.

The decentralisation of processes associated with the resolution of bilateral conflicts therefore arises as a necessity. The prevalence of considerations of national interests in such processes tends to separate the outcome of its policies towards remediation and intervention from the necessities dictating the same (Buzan et al., 1989). As a result, the resolution that is engineered through such means comes to represent a disjuncture from the realities of the circumstances it seeks to attain. The enquiries made by this study on the bilateral resolution process with regard to the India-Bangladesh border enclaves clearly represents the histories of such spaces in the context of claims made over them by the two states. If one views the conditions of local conflicts underlying the presence of stateless enclaves in the Indian and Bangladeshi borderland locales, two distinct narratives emerge. Firstly, an understanding of conflict that is outlined by notions of uninterrupted national borders and the identification of the enclave residents as citizens – issues that are resonant with the national interests of both states; and secondly, a localised articulation with is associated constructs of rights, entitlements and belonging. Subsequently, by dismissing the attribution of significance to the experiences of its inhabitants, as well as of the locale in which such spaces were embedded, in navigating through its associated complexities of existence and its interfaces with the state, bilateral and national narratives have correspondingly represented the inhabitants of these spaces as passive and unvarying in their acceptance of decisions articulated by the states

(Chaturvedi, 2000). As a result, official policies towards resolution of this issue have only successfully addressed the most apparent complications which aligned with the convergent national interests of the two states.

To view the bilateral resolution of the enclave issue as a conclusive solution to the conflict can therefore be problematised at various levels. Firstly, it obscures local efforts towards negotiating the extant complications of the overarching issue in a manner that allowed all its constituent actors and groups to establish localised productions of stability through resolution of their conflicts and differences. Even in the absence of the state, local actors were successful in traversing such gaps in extending solutions that often mirrored the formal processes of resolution brought forth by the state later on. In fact, these solutions were established through the perpetuities in interactions between the enclave and non-enclave locals which contests the absolutism underlying conceptualisations of their statelessness and associated isolation. Given that such consultations and subsequent solutions were based upon recognitions extended by the local level, they emerged not as abrupt impositions of state policy, but as more organic reckonings and crystallisations of localised interactions. This statement however does not preclude the differences in power and position that existed between the enclave and non-enclave locals, as has been illustrated by the study but posits this as a more equitable configuration in comparison to the bilateral resolution. What should be emphasised upon instead is the process through which such configurations of interactions and solicitations were negotiated at the local levels. Localised adaptations come to fruition through different stages of interaction between local actors, which may be exigent upon present or emergent circumstances of existence or in response to certain specific issues, over a

longer period of time. Therefore, these adaptations come forth in a manner that affects local processes differently when viewed in comparison with state policies which in contrast appear as unprompted and abrupt modifications and interruptions upon the extant conditions of local life.

National or Bilateral policies which respond to necessities of national interest tend to straightjacket understandings of complex, localised conflicts under broad categories which may not be representative of the intricacies of the conflict situation and setting, the relationship and identities of its principal actors and, the inherent transmutability of its accompanying circumstances. Therefore, policies towards resolution often fall short of accounting for the changes the implementation of its procedures brings forth at the local level. Such procedures are often represented as unqualified resolutions to on-going conflicts, beyond which reconfigurations of their scope to respond to the subsequent transformations they bring forth are sometimes marginal, and often absent. This can be explained by explorations of the continuation of local conflicts beyond the point of state intercession, whether in a unilateral or bilateral capacity. The continuation of instabilities at the local level can be attributed to the erasure of localised adaptations by state policies, or because of the essentialised nature of intervention by the state in such matters. In either case, the existing conflict tends to persist in forms beyond its original form, and although certain issues underlying the same may have been resolved through these means; in reality, interventions as such often prematurely declares the resolution it brings forth to exist in totality and perpetuity. Such understandings of resolution tend to view it in terms of a linear understanding as opposed to a continuous process that must be carried forth in

time to address the exigencies of a society in transition from a conflict to a post-conflict existence.

To understand why general policies of resolution have not been effective in establishing stability and peace, one needs to analyse the language that underwrites resolution as a process of conflict management (Little, 2012). The main concern underlying overarching narratives of conflict can be elucidated under two points. Firstly, the multiplicity of definitions and its range of applicability implies that an idea of settlement with regard to a particular scenario will fail to elicit a consensus about what constitutes resolution, as well as understanding who is committed to the same purported ideals of resolution and who is not. Secondly, narrowing down such a complex socio-political process into a static and sequestered taxonomy will further marginalise efforts to integrate other perspectives that do not correspond with the over-arching definitional construct thus created, whether at the national or local level. This will lead to what can be categorised as paradigmatic policing. The acceptability of certain reconfigurations will be contingent on whether it ascribes to the overarching established definition, rather than necessity in terms of ensuring effective applicability in certain contexts. Therefore the locus of relevance needs to be placed on establishing and maintaining fluidity of such definitional constructs such that the language does not frame the space, context and nature of debates surrounding the central concept of reconciliation and our readings of specific cases. In most instances of modern day conflicts, it is necessity that frames the language of resolution, and not the contingencies of a particular situation. As a result, the entire gamut of policies and events that are considered to be progressive steps in the direction of

establishing stability, come to be founded on certain, specific conditions that are sought to be instituted.

General theories of reconciliation thus constituted have a tendency to generate further political conflict (Little, 2012; Drexler, 2007). This is so, primarily because the language of resolution is determined by the state which can impact upon local perceptions and productions of conflicts. These normativities, if questioned, reveal the subjectivity underlying the identification of reconciliation as an intrinsically positive and progressive implementation (Mckenzie, 2001). An alternative framing can destabilise the perceived relation between conflicts and resolution, and be sensitive to the conceptualisation of conflict as a process whose end does not necessarily lie in settlement. However, the predominance of statist apperceptions in the discourse on conflict resolution and bilateral intervention continues to position the idea of resolution as the final stage of conflict cycles.

Engaging with Local Capacities of Resolution

Local issues are understood to be spatially confined in their scope of operation to one region of a state, but they carry the potential of spilling over onto neighbouring states or other parts of the same state, thereby necessitating bilateral mediation in their management. Perceptions underlying the emergence of local issues are articulated by local power elites and other local actors, which give these accounts a definite narrativised form either independent of or in relation to larger national discourses through which bilateral intercession is mediated. These narrativised productions of the local provide insights into understanding the overriding positioning of a community with regard to its

conflicts. These perceptions go on to illuminate our understandings of localised perceptions of the issue vis-à-vis its representation in bilateral or national narratives.

Concerning issues which are more often just likely to remain localised with regard to their scope of operation; it is only their perception at the level of the states which draws them into conduits of bilateral mediation. In such instances, local narratives are produced in isolation from prevalent statist discourse in an effort to assert the distinctiveness of the issue(s) whose underlying potentials for adaptations and disruptions its inhabitants seek to harness, circumvent or even resist. However, in certain instances, the local attempts to legitimise its claims or even gain more visibility for their cause by tying up with larger movements or the grand-narrative of the state underlying a particular issue. The perceptions and representations underlying local issues are dependent on the nature of relations its socio-spatial productions hold in their interactions with the central authority of a state and its associated narratives. The relative positionality of these two categories determines whether the local will either tend to mobilise against incursions into spheres of local autonomy, or view them as necessary through the extension of their support. The relationship between these two perceptive categories is textured by the nature of political power manifest at these levels and the impacts of their subsequent ideologisations, which can result in a convergence of their interests, or resistance towards the practicalisation of opposing acuities around a particular issue or common interest. However, in the context of formulating national interests, the 'local' is viewed as being restricted to a particular space in terms of the scope of its operation and subsequent ramifications. Such interpretations do not necessarily account for the potential implications of 'local' dynamics on the larger 'national' discourse. Therefore, in the process of engagement with

other nation states, the 'national' becomes 'public affair', whereas the 'local' is relegated to the realm of 'domestic affairs'. Although issues operational at the local level, are often viewed as peripheral concerns, not necessarily contributing to the formulation of national issues, at times when they directly align with the strategic and security interests of a nation state, the whole discourse of the 'local' may take the shape of a 'national' issue.

To an extent, the nature of the national political structure plays an instrumental role in determining the relationship between national and local dynamics in the context of the representation and treatment of local issues and interests. Systems with greater levels of transferences of authority allow for the viewing of the local in its own right, and are often institutionally bounded against unwarranted interference in its affairs. However, in more centralised systems, the possibility of intervention remains rather high with its productions of authority situating the need for the same on broad concerns dealing with the preservation or enhancement of national interest. These concerns are represented in an ambiguous and essentialised manner so as to ensure their wide-ranging applicability over the process of an evolving, local situation, whereby all of its changing contours are subsumed under its overarching framework for intervention or appropriation. 'Local' issues are therefore not represented as being rooted in the specificities of political, ideological, ethnic, or socio-economic dynamics that are exclusively tied to the socio-spatial category of the 'local'. On the other hand, in case involvement by the 'national' is solicited or unilaterally enacted, the same issues are represented as local manifestations of larger, national or regional productions. Therefore, local narratives can serve as a counterpoise to assess the accuracy of national narratives surrounding local issues; and in cases where such issues are addressed through associations with the national grand-

narrative; it gradually wears away local control and agency over the management of its affairs.

The variability of understandings that permeate the understanding of the border and the identities, notions of access and mobilities it generates, necessitates a need to look deeper into the more localised framings of the space, which to some extent have been obscured by more popular and statist conceptualisations of the border and its associated processes of demarcation and control (Hämäläinen & Truett, 2011, p. 348). These variances emerge from the adaptive capabilities of the borderland local, in engaging with continuous processes of changes and reconfigurations to their extant conditions. By mapping out the perceptions and experiences generated by the border at the local level, and how the same changes in relation to one's proximity to this site of inquiry one can capture the variability in views, ideas and realities related to the border; and its associated functions in defining localised perceptions of nationality, sovereignty, power and also its impacts upon framing identities. The scalar understanding of the borderland in statist apperceptions is often prone to reconfigurations in the face of extant conditions such as nature of bilateral relations with the neighbouring countries, incidence of borderland conflicts, or prioritisation of issues related to localised mobilities and processes that may be considered disruptive to the preservation of the state's limits. However, policies responding to such challenges often tend to assume a wide-ranging outlook which does not seek to distinguish between state borders and localised construals of limits to mobilities and access, which often do not run contiguous with the state's rendering of its spatial margins.

At this juncture, the concept of the borderscape assumes significance, in defining the space in a manner that not only transcends statist territorial epistemologies and processual renderings in understanding borders as sites where alternative comprehensions of identity, citizenship and otherness are effected through processes of localised reconfigurations in response to the state's presence . In this context, the idea of the local, not only at the borders, but at different existences of spatial disaggregation becomes a relevant point of engagement (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007, p. x). Borderscapes therefore becomes relevant in recognising an alternative spatial conceptualisation that may operate or respond to the state in a manner incommensurate with tendencies that may be discernible in other spatialities embedded within the same territorial settings. Such a variable perception of the border becomes evident in the manner in which it is interpreted by collectives situated proximate to these sites of separation and those at a distance from it.

Interactions and opportunities assume centrality in understandings of borderland dynamics; whether between local actors separated by the border, or between such collectives and the state. Interactions between local collectives and the state tend to assume a tilted dynamic given the power differential that resides with the latter (Jones, 2012, p. 144). As a consequence, in more ways than not, interactions as such are often not equitable, but responsive and reactive. At the level of the borderland local, responses to state-initiated changes are often prompted by policies of regulation and control. The state's borders therefore emerge as spaces which facilitate and disrupt the existent and imposed institutions and practices that shape interactions between collectives contained and separated by them. The adaptations of the local may take up different forms. It may

be in substituting the functions of the state in an informal capacity in its absence, and over time encompassing a wider range of characteristics straddling identification of individuals, solicitations for mobilities and interactions across lines of separation and limitations instituted by the state's control. Such adaptations also continue to exist, albeit in altered forms once the state intercedes at the local level in a much more pronounced capacity. On the other hand, the consequences of such intercessions may also result in the complete disintegration of local armatures of support and replications of the state given the invalidation of their authority that becomes apparent given the transference of local claims from these channels to the state. The interpretations of such collapses at the local levels are underlined by multiple subjectivities which are determined by the positionality of the actors, as well as the outcome of such consequences on their conditions of existence.

Therefore, the idea of the local correspondingly comes to be rooted in variability, whereby an array of positions on extant circumstances may emerge and contest with one another to assert themselves as the defining framework through which localised interpretations and responses to systemic and structural transformations may be produced. In the instance of the borderland local studied in this research, the emergence of the non-enclave local as the prominent framework through which local relations were ordered is evident to this assertion. However, the fracturing of local perceptions within provinces containing enclaves was also evident not only within the immediate borderscape spatiality, but also further away from it, as has been engaged with in detail by the study. Therefore, frameworks of reference and construals unlike sites of conflicts are never spatially contained, and therefore extending the same argument it can be

claimed that the impacts of the same are also resonant across different spatialities and their corresponding acuities. The variability of interpretations is dependent upon factors such as distance from sites of conflict, similarities and differences in collective experiences of their constituent demography, as well as degrees of political conformation. The range of expressions of conformity and lack thereof towards state policies can be traced through an exploration of the impacts the same will have on extant conditions of life. Opinions regarding certain policies although viewed to impact specific socio-spatial configurations are often bolstered by support for the same from collectives situated at a distance from the sites of its operationalisation (Yuval-Davis et al, 2019, p. 162), thereby extending the perceptive limits of the locale. Whereas the local constituting the immediate sphere of impact of such policies, may welcome such intercessions as necessary or view them as disruptive to the adaptations eked out in the period of the absence of state led mediations.

The interpretations of mediations as disruptive are based around the problematique of the absence of local considerations from processes of policy formulation. The view of the local as a static and passive component upon which such changes may be administered often constitutes the causes for localised movements of resistance or subversion. Such tendencies become even more apparent near the borders whereby states' authority to reserve the right towards exclusive action tends to be more pronounced and categorical. These interpretations tend to preclude the adaptive capacities of the local in responding to extant challenges which may be emergent out of conditions of conflict, lack of state mediation or the need to preserve existing processes and mobilities critical to the conservation of local stability and continuities in critical interactions within channels of

subsistence, dependence and support. The continuation of such processes subsequent to state mediation is often viewed as disruptive to the stability sought to be brought forth through such policies, without recognising the difficulties and instabilities that may arise from their abrupt erasure. Often, this offsets the stability brought forth through adaptations at the local level, reversing some of the progresses made in terms of the objectives sought to be achieved by the state, prior to its insertion into the local state of affairs. What requires attention is the manner in which the local interposed in a situation demanding some form of mediation, which in the case of bilateralism may often be susceptible to the necessities of national interest alignment or convergence between the two states among whom the problem stands common.

The tendency of the state in centralising and subsequently (inter)nationalising issues whose implications are confined to the specific spatiality of its operation, dissociates all potential for local negotiations and adaptations; even if proven to have rendered progressive outcomes towards resolution, and often leads to a transmutation of the conflict. The locus of localised consideration shifts from its extant circumstances to which it had effectively responded through its own capacities, to responding to the corresponding changes in its settings brought upon by state or bilateral policies. Therefore, a conflict that may have been resolved through local capacities leading to the emergence of a post-conflict sociality, replete with frangible balances and negotiations may be debilitated through such mediations. Subsequently, leading to the emergence of conditions that may constitute grounds for a conflict, and which stands apart from the original set of circumstances which state or bilateral policies sought to address. Consequently, claims of resolution arrived at as such may be positioned on erroneous

considerations not accounting for the volatility of prevalent social conditions which carry the potential to foment new conflicts. Thus, understandings of conflict exist at two levels – one at the level of the state and the other at the local stage. The former views conflicts as unchanging issues that are subject to change in a linear rendering, that is, from the incidence of a conflict to its resolution. Local perceptions of conflict, in contrast, are more dynamic and encompass all the transformations that take place in its immediate sphere of operation and the subsequent adaptations and negotiations they engender. Thereby, viewing conflicts as a continuing process that does not always conclude in absolute and interminable resolution, but one that is contingent upon the alignments of interest and involvement, which at best is transient.

Reserving a more provisional understanding of conflicts to predicate processes of resolution upon allows for continuing reconfigurations that extend into engagements in a post-conflict space as well. Accounting for the inherent transmutability of social conditions which conflicts are based upon evinces processes for its solution upon extant contingencies, instead of abstractions of national interest which are contrastingly static. In viewing conflicts as mutable, approaches towards resolution must correspondingly transcend interest-based intercession. The major issues with such an approach is that the conflict comes to be viewed in terms of the impacts it renders upon the pursuit or preservation of national interests, rather than its impacts in its localised space of operation. The abstractions of national interests such as issues of security, development, stability tend to be expansive in scope allowing for the subsuming of a wide array of issues within its fold. Given the state's hegemony over the construal of issues related to these inalienable aspects of its domain (Walker, 1993), the representation of conflicts

therefore come to be viewed through the lens of its own interests. For this very reason, when one examines the local conflicts brought forth by the study, and the subsequent solutions engendered through local adaptations against the bilateral policies of their resolution, the gaps between representation of the conflict and the outcomes of these resolution processes becomes all the more apparent.

Local adaptations to conflicts related to the enclaves were prompted through its actors' engagement with its underlying conditionalities over a long period of time. During this period the interests of associated actors, relations of power and dominance, requirements for effective cooperation were evinced, which constituted the foundations upon which a complex matrix of localised interactions and interdependencies were established. These complex systems, which were adapted to the requirements of the locale constituted a means through which its extant conditions were continually assessed to find solutions towards bypassing conditions of different local conflicts that emerged in this space at different points in time. These framings do not preclude the emergence of individual/group interests as an influence upon action and engagement between local actors, as is evident from the case studies presented by the research. Similarly, it does not position such local processes as devoid of considerations of localised authority and unsteady balances between actors and groups operating on a skewed distribution of power. However, one of the key differences between this process and one emergent from the states in a bilateral capacity is how the former is based upon considerations of resolution derived from local exigencies and necessities. Subsequently, as a process that is based out of the locale, it is dependent upon continuous reconfigurations and negotiations in order to preserve the equilibriums wrought out of such localised

processes. As the study has brought forth, these negotiations can be viewed as the outcome of actor-specific attempts in preserving positions of dominance, or in securing the continuity of recompenses, benefits and advantages derived from these processes.

Although, interests also constitute the grounds upon which localised resolution processes were structured and initiated, the fact that the same were directly related to the needs to the locale's inhabitants constitutes another key point of difference with state-initiated intercessions which often respond chiefly to the abstractions and intangibilities associated with national interests. Therefore it may be claimed, that to some extent, local processes replicated the state in the manner of its mediation at the local level, with one of the key separators being the scope of interests and resultant outcomes being spatially contained in its context of operation, whereas with the state it often traversed the realms of the incorporeal. As a result, the stability brought forth through such processes, although not recognised as credible solutions owing to their underlying informalities, tends to be more enduring. Primarily so, because of constant realignments they respond to in addressing the circumstances of a locale in flux. Viewed against this, the inert nature of state-initiated policies of resolution, undergirded by linearity in perceptions of conflicts often does not necessitate intervention subsequently, and views issues that emerge *post facto* its intervention as dissociated from its key purview. Perceptions of conflicts that are not static or linear therefore tend to engender more effective solutions, primarily because it does not seek to bring forth a complete erasure of conditions contributing to the emergence of its constitutive circumstances. Instead, it aims towards progressively transforming the same into conditions that hold the potential for more effective negotiations between actors and groups prevailing within its spatiality of existence. These

issues are often situated within a larger recognition that they constitute the realities of existence for actors and groups in a conflict situation, and therefore familiarity with its underlying incentives and indemnities tends to be more pronounced. This allows for a clearer understanding of its constitutive issues, enabling actors to eke out the probabilities of negotiations that cover a comprehensive scope of interests, representative of a broader cross-section of the locale.

Although differences in power are also existent at the local level, the negotiations brought forth are not impositions from above, but instead brought forth through deliberations and dialogue at the local level. Concerning probable outcomes, such processes tend to be more equitable in terms of distribution of benefits and restitutions as the power differential is not skewed to the extent whereby collaboration is completely redundant, but becomes an essential component for the maintenance of the prepollency of certain actor groups. As without the recognition of other local actors, their position and consequent authority would cease to exist; primarily in situations where the state may interpolate itself at any point, and subsequently position itself as the sole purveyor of benefits and welfares at the local level. Therefore these positions at the local level whereby solutions for existent conflicts may be brought forth are contingent upon the nature of the issue itself, and its priorities towards its escalation by the state. In case of border conflicts, the pronounced role of the state in securitising its frontiers may often necessitate swift action, thereby destabilising local actors and groupings, and their efforts towards negotiating their underlying conditions of existence. However, even though such substitutions and transpositions appear straightforward, in a bilateral context they are often determinant upon the alignment of national interests of two actors. In the interim,

local capacities tend to thrive in bringing forth a stabilisation of the locale and its relations between constituent actors.

The adaptations brought forth through local capacities involves a continuous process of negotiation to build support networks, legitimise informal solicitations for interactions, exchanges and mobilities between different actors, and also intermediate in local conflicts. Continuing interfaces constitute a key part of local capacities as the power underlying such a continuum is never static in its distribution, as one encounters when interrelating with the state. In contrast, prepollency at the local level exists in a continuous state of flux, and the distributions of power are never steady and therefore prone to shifts from one group to another at different points in time. Therefore, local actors are often prompted by such conditions to continually interface with one another, in an effort to accommodate these mutable conditions of power, secure their intended outcomes through cooperation, and also maintain balances at the local level that ensures the existence of its supporting machinations in perpetuity, or till the next conditional shift in its existence (Grassiani & Swinkels, 2014). Such processes tend to be continually evolving in response to the extant circumstances of the local space. The stability brought forth through such recourses comes to be based upon the contingencies and shared experiences of localised existence. It is achieved through necessities brought forth by existence within such spaces, whereby such negotiations constitute the very basis of subsistence, rather than in pursuit of detached and supercilious ideals as is observed in instances of state-led reconciliation.

The insertion of the state at this point can have varying effects at the local level. It may either supplement local processes existent before the arrival of the state in a mediatory

capacity, or disrupt the same. This becomes contingent upon factors that determine the nature of the conflict in which the state seeks to intercede. These factors range from the spatiality of the conflict's existence, its intersection with issues related to the national interests of the state, the nature of the conflict – that is, whether violent, latent or structural. However, instances whereby local capacities have been empowered in conflict settings whereby their existence interfaces with a state's national interest considerations, have been near absent. The primacy that is accorded to the state as the sole authority responsible for the articulation and accomplishment of its interests, logically positions it as the sole purveying authority in such settings. Therefore, its insertion into such spaces also assumes the underlying implications of a unitary disposition of the local, whereby its efforts towards the resolution of its conflicts, are not recognised as progressive changes subsequently contributing towards some semblance of stability at the local level. The authority and capabilities of local armatures of support which emerged out of localised experiences of existence in a conflict environment therefore come to be abridged in the process. This prompts the question whether under analogous circumstances; the empowerment of the local emerges as a credible alternative to state intercession.

Empowerment of Local Capacities and Reviewing Linear Construals of Conflict

Understandings of conflict have predominantly been based around the state's identification of its key constitutive factors. These estimations are reducible to certain qualifiers contributing to the fulfilment of its national interests; which in turn determines the nature of state response towards the same. The subsequent categorisation of issues as conflicts by the state therefore, comes to be dissociated from the realities of its existence/persistence at the local level of its operation. In view of that, solutions in the

form of resolution frameworks and settlement processes tend to be guided by states' analysis of what constitutes the fundamental reasons contributing to the persistence of a particular conflict at the local levels.

A critical foray into the state's categorisation of conflicts reveals interesting patterns that contradict its classifications. In fact, state-led resolution processes which are predicated on such assumptions tend to transform conflicts through the intensification or variegating of its scope, subsequently transforming the 'local' site of its operation through changes in the rules of quotidian interactions of its inhabitants. Therefore, the prioritising of reconciliation as the most preferable form of conflict management needs to be brought under a critical view in order to recognise the same as a process whose effectiveness is variable across different conditions. But to do so, we must begin to reconfigure our understanding of conflicts and the varied nature of its existence across different socio-spatial configurations.

Viewing the idea of resolution from a bilateral or even unitary perspective, as this study has shown, obscures the more local processes that perform similar roles of stabilisation in local conflict settings. To view conflicts from the lens of national interests reduces not only the scope of its interpretation which comes to be inductively constructed, in relation to certain identified interests; but also limits the scope of the processes of resolution as well. Successively, it also confines public perceptions of what certain conflicts entail to categories determined by the state, which are not fully representative of ground realities. To consider conflicts as such, the realities underlying its localised contingencies can only then be educed through an exploration of the local as the site and signifier of the conflict itself. Such a shift is also necessitated in a disciplinary paradigm whereby the state

assumes centrality in all configurations and processes (Morgenthau 1954), obfuscating other spatialisations of power that may operate at varying levels of disaggregation. These then become essential in extracting a comprehensive understanding of not only conflicts, but other social phenomena at the local levels as well, such cooperation, collectivisations and mobilisations. Deriving from this premise, interactions between the local and the state need not subsume under a coalescing banner of compatibility, but one that comes to be configured through processes of action, reaction and also inaction.

Although the decentralisation of state capacities at the borders becomes difficult to envisage, the recognition of local capacities and their significance in the maintenance of its constituent balances can be acknowledged as a step towards configuring a comprehensive understanding of resolution and its underlying processes. The stability evinced through such localised processes, although transient does establish conditions whereby the circumstances underlying a conflict often come to be reconciled, even if temporarily. The empowerment of local capacities although stands out as a credible solution to the crises of recognition and legitimisation; there are obvious complications potentially underwriting this process. Most obviously, does this de-necessitate the need for state intervention in some situations or is the responsibility for resolution in this regard to be solely entrusted in local capacities. If so, would the incidence of successful resolutions of conflicts increase as a consequence? In such a referential vacuum whereby comparable instances have not been available for us to derive or base conclusions upon the efficacy of such processes, it would also be premature to rule out its potentials as well. The scale of local empowerment can never be absolute, especially with regard to sites of conflict that are either situated near national borders or spill over them; as such

extensions would stand against the prepollency of the state and its sovereign authority. A compromise that becomes difficult to envision, given the historicity of unqualified state action with regard to the management of their borders. Therefore, the extent of local empowerment must be kept contingent upon an estimation of its subsequent impacts upon its constituent socio-spatial configurations, and on the realisation of a state's national interests. Such a balance may not subscribe to formulaic suppositions, but instead could come to be based upon the ever-changing exigencies of the locale and the transformations in its conflict environment, and the nature of national composition. The balance between local and state capacities therefore must be attuned to the specificities of a particular set of circumstances or a specific conflict; otherwise it remains susceptible to the epistemological trappings that ideas of conflict resolution in International Relations have frequently fallen into whereby static singularities in approaches have underscored linear understandings of resolution.

Although prescriptions in this regard will falter in providing a framework of reference in etching out equitable models in balancing the powers of the state and the locale it engages with, there are certain undeniable advantages to the same. The local familiarity in the context of the conflict manifests in the form of equitable negotiations that constitute compromises and recompenses for all actors concerned. These solutions, even if transitory, represent a resolution that is eked out from the ground up. Therefore, considerations of national interests are substituted by the recognition of 'local interests', operating within the microcosm of the locale. As a result, the primary consideration shifts to the addressing of concerns related to the stability and preservation of the local, its constitutive dynamics of interactions and interdependencies, and frameworks of power;

rather than in service of certain dissociated abstractions of national interests that may not hold any consonance with local realities. Additionally, such solutions do not arrive as disruptions to the lived reality of the local, as they come to being through quotidian interactions, which crystallise as processes, often without any formal measure initiated towards its recognition. Such processes stand in stark contrast against state mediation, whereby policies introduced often are unrepresentative of local realities and their implementation marks a disjuncture from the local way of being. Therefore, resistance and adaptability become unyielding realities that often delays a comprehensive resolution of locally operating conflicts at national and bilateral levels of engagement.

The empowerment of the local therefore stands as a viable alternative towards comprehending the impact of bilateral and unilateral policies towards conflict resolution on the sites of their emergence. Such a consideration tends to miscarry the notion of resolution to represent an unqualified shift towards stability brought forth through the states' mediation. The local realities that belie such comprehensions, transform over time in response to the changes levied upon them. Existing as contestations to the unchanging notions of constancy of post-conflict stabilities, the local can therefore be used as a referent upon which the requirements for subsequent intercessions can be gauged. The local as the site of conflict stands as a more dynamic, yet tangible setting upon which the need for intervention and the nature of policies can be assessed. Mapping out changes in the relations between constituent actors, shifts in local power dynamics, and emergences of complications and compliances can perform a very important predictive function, with regard to evaluating the need to alter the state's approach towards the space or its extant conflicts. Contrastingly, abstract notions of national interest appear as a limitless

continuum facilitating the inductive justification of certain variants of state action, a theme that has been engaged with by the study in elaborate detail through the cases presented. Based upon the aforementioned suppositions, the study posits a continuing and balanced approach towards resolution, which views the local sites of conflict as self-regulating spaces and not as stages upon which the fulfilment of national interests is to be sought. Thereby, in viewing the local as an active category replete with its own set of functional attributes and dynamics, processes of state-intercessions can balance out its approaches by examining which localised processes require augmenting or formal effecting, in a manner that remains consonant with its pursuit of national interests.

Theoretical and conceptual conundrums as such often tend to advocate the unqualified prioritisation of one perspective over the other. Such circumstances often tend to position alternativity in approaches as the solution to the inadequacies of preceding frameworks. Although such possibilities have often proven to hold true generally; in circumstances involving considerations that impact upon lived realities and life processes at the local level equilibrium seems to be a better suited approach. The requirement for state intervention in bilateral issues or conflicts appears inevitable, as the alternative to such mediation may comprise more transient and informal processes of balance-making and creation between local actors and between them and the state. Such transformations are easily overturned through changes effected at the policy level primarily because local negotiations which effect such changes are never static or uniform in their existence and operation between different sets of local actors. There exists a wide array of variables that may also overturn the balances upon which the continuation of such localised interactions take place. Often, local collectives or representatives of the state, as signified through

such arguments, do not necessarily represent the larger objectives embodied by their referents, but instead act towards the pursuit of specific, individual interests. At the same time, such interfaces are also viewed to be possible in a setting whereby the local and the state, even at the level of their individual components, interact in framing the space and in the assignation of permissibility to certain exchanges.

The limits of such processes are also marked by recognitions of the boundaries of inter-actorial agency, as they interact in a capacity undergirded by the perceived authorities of their referential categories of local and national. Consequently, local negotiations often come to be subsumed under the garb of informality or illegality, whereas an alternative conceptualisation of the same would view such interactions as the logical corollary of existence within the restricted confinements of a regulated socio-spatial existence; thereby positioning adaptations prior and subsequent to state mediation constitute certain inescapable realities of local existence. Thereby, local actors continue to stretch the limits of permissible actions and exchanges in order to eke out a balance that is suited to the circumstances of their existence. This goes further to dispute the infallibility of state or bilateral policies which attempt to establish conditions through intercession that are viewed to be unchanging in the impacts they evince. What differentiates between local adaptations in consonance with the state and in its resistance is determined by the foundations upon which such interactions are premised and subsequently interpreted. That is, either upon considerations of abstract national interests that are effected through issue or space-specific policies; or upon considerations of enablement through processes of qualifying, recognising and permitting local processes that function with similar, although unspecified intentions of maintaining stability of interactions and exchanges

between constituent actors. Therefore, local spaces of conflict must be viewed as capable of effecting transformations through which stability can be brought forth, either prior to the state's arrival or subsequent to the implementation of national/bilateral policies towards its management. To view conflicts as situations whereby quotidian capacities and processes stand suspended would be a reductive exemplification of the capacity of the locale to continue to function effectively under such circumstances. At this juncture, the question of who the actors in a conflict space are, or specifically identifying the actors engaged in a conflict must transcend essentialist construals which seek to categorise identifications under broad taxonomies (Hansen, 2009, p. 343-34). This obfuscates the flexibility exercised by actors engaged at different capacities and representing diverse referents acting within the boundaries that their respective agencies are underwritten by; often testing the elasticity of such boundaries through interactions that do not necessarily fall within the recognised purview of action that their identities carry. This necessitates a view of conflict by the state that takes into account its mutability of circumstances and actors' orientations towards particular objectives, bringing forth conceptualisations that are not static and unchanging. This provides the space for reconfigurations in approach towards a conflict setting and in informing interactions between constituent actors, which stands opposed to the linear narrativisation of conflict timelines. This subsequently positions the idea of resolution upon a series of continuous and necessary interventions based upon recognition of its prerequisite with regard to circumstantial exigencies as evinced by local actors and their interactions.

At the same time, categorising conflicts as unending would overlook the possibility of a resolution. Such a conceptualisation would only relegate the predicament to a situation

wherein the necessity for resolution by utilising available means would be overlooked. To view conflicts as a natural outcome of invariable human nature would also consign the necessity for its resolution to a state of redundancy. What needs to be recognised is that interactions and exchanges amongst states straddle a wide spectrum of possible outcomes, of which conflict and cooperation constitutes its most extreme probabilities. Even though considerations of power are the main drivers of international action and behaviour, there does exist a considerable scope for evincing cooperation as well. Therefore, this line of criticism is partially true, primarily due to the predominance of Realist precepts in policy formation at the national and bilateral levels. Still, the prevalence of power calculations in decision making and policy formulation needs to be viewed as a means of assessing conflict potentials and inter-state dynamics, rather than as an acceptance of the inevitability of conflict. (Bandyopadhyaya, 1993)

A dynamic construal of conflict and resolution therefore becomes necessary to transcend essentialisms in representations of the same and in devising approaches towards resolution. To view conflicts as complex social phenomena that is subject to changes and transformation over the course of its existence, positions ideas of resolution on more realistic considerations of continuing negotiations with actors and circumstances; as opposed to point-source engagements that are represented as bringing forth enduring constancies in the conflict setting. In positioning the idea of resolution on an understanding of conflict that is dynamic and ever-changing; reflective of the real-time transformations that occur in its settings provides for a wider scope of engagement through its accompanying policies. Therefore, resolution does not come to be reductively associated with ideas that essentially entail a reversal of extant conditions; or upon

assumptions that the conditions that generated a conflict at the local level remain inert through the course of the emergence of its resultant manifestations.

Expanding Notions of 'Local' Agency in Conflict Settings

Choices constitute a principal locus of relevance in understanding state behaviour, conflict, and inter-state relations. However, the manner in which choices in the International Relations have been viewed and engaged with, as this study posits, represents a relatively reductionist perspective. Understanding choice-making and enacting amongst key referents of the state have been subjected to two readings – an objectivist reading based on underpinning choices onto a larger framework of rational decision making, a model derived from micro-economics. And, secondly, a subjectivist reading that is founded upon interpreting the dynamics of interaction between the substructure and the superstructure of this framework, and the manner in which such interactions determine the nature of choices or course of actions certain collectives are more likely to take. Neither of these two positions, however, account for the manner in which these choices are effected or why they are performed. Instead, both positions take a broad view of choice-making, by stating that the nature of choices and the manner in which they are exercised are determined by the presence of certain pre-existing systemic and structural conditions and factors.

Choices and predilection towards an opportunity may not always be determined in a manner contingent with what might be identified as the principle of rationality in that particular context. For a choice to be considered as rational, one needs to account for and justify the elimination of all the other available options as potential choices. Whereby, on

the basis of certain subjective or objective frameworks their exclusion is justified. Therefore, when an actor attributes the performance of a certain action or the utterance of a statement to choice, one is required to understand the manner in which the choice-making has been effected; to comprehend whether the same choice can be classified as being rational, or as a distinctive reaction to specific circumstances. Choice therefore constitutes a rather complicated concept to delineate in International Relations. Just because a certain kind of choice-making does not ascribe to the rationale of 'rational' action, it cannot be relegated to the realm of the subjective, which has over time transformed into a vault for everything that exists beyond the purview of reasonable deduction.

Similarly, just because a certain action can be rationally explained and justified, does not make it any less subjective or idiosyncratic. The problem of such a conceptualisation in choice-making is in the relevance that is ascribed to the manner in which the decision or choice is arrived at, as opposed to the manner in which it is executed or performed or why such decisions are taken in the first place. Deriving from this understanding, choice in International Relations has also been understood as possessing two stratums. Firstly, as a thought or belief that is based on the assumption of certain conditions and circumstances which inform or impel the final decision or stance assumed by an actor. Secondly, choice as action denotes the exercise of opinions which manifests in the performance of certain actions based on a particular selection of intentionality. It is at the level of choice as action that considerable emphasis is attributed, since it is only when a certain choice or position has some material basis of identification that it can be codified

as being representative of a certain progression of decisions over quantifiable selections (Allison, 1971).

International Relations has focussed substantially on the theoretical and notional construction of choice and the effects of exercising the same, without much attention to the subjectivities underlying the manner in which such choices are executed and the reasons determining its selections. That is, the discipline places emphasis on the manner in which choices are constituted and the effects of their implementation. Whereas, questions regarding the rationale of their execution or selection are usually classified and categorised under broad groupings derived from reductionist classifications of state behaviour; embedded within historicised perceptions of their foundational principles of action and interaction. The problem with basing opinions derived out of the historical generalisability of behaviour and interaction as well as essentialising behaviour from the frequency with which a certain form of action/reaction/inaction has been exhibited by an actor over time, negates the importance of viewing incidents of interest as independent processes (Wendt, 1987, p. 395). In no way is this, a critique against the need for historical contextualisation to comprehend the rationale underlying choices made by states. However, to attribute centrality to it, to the extent that it becomes conclusive is problematic, as it runs the risk of determinism.

A central point of contention that emerges when studying conflicts and their resolution at a national or bilateral level has been an inherent tendency of such processes to speak for the state without seeking to comprehend the considerations underlying the abstraction of the national, which they represent. The origins of such propensities can be traced back to this central problematique in assuming the intrinsic character of national configurations

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and basing further theories of interactions and interdependence of different actors on the same assumed centrality of the idea. The larger narrative of the 'national' represents a grand construct, constituted around certain identified interests that are considered to have direct implications on the continued existence of the nation state, or on the overall nature of the regional or international order (Cox, 1981, p. 1983). The issues around which the 'national' is constructed are considered to be 'national issues', the realisation of which is thought to have implications on the state as a whole. However, such issues do not always carry such widespread implications, but are often confined in terms of their scope of operation. Yet, the implications they potentially do carry, elevates them to a level of significance whereby they are appropriated by the state as a 'national issue'. The mode of formation of the 'national' therefore, can be understood as an aggregation of interests from lower levels. Since their underlying narratives are formed through the collation of dispersed interests arising out of lower levels of aggregation, the process of articulating these varied concerns often comes to be based on a subjective ordering of certain issues over others. This ascribes a certain amount of inconstancy, with regard to the formation of the idea of 'national interests'. The process, by which the 'national' is constructed, thereby comes to be based on a unilaterally determined understanding of what is significant and in need of prioritising. In certain cases, local issues with perceived security or foreign policy implications are transformed into a national issue either in association with the local or in a unilateral, pre-emptive manner by the centralised authority itself.

The character of the 'national' thus constituted, depends on the underlying value-system of the state in question, which determines their stand on certain issues in the context of

the ideological disposition of their power. In terms of regional as well as internal dynamics of the states concerned, the nature of the 'national' comes to be determined by the same due to the possibility of facing obstacles in its intervention in and appropriation of local affairs or issues. However, appropriation of such issues as contributing to the national interest of the state depends upon the nature of the relationship between the local and the national. Depending on the character of this interrelationship, intervention in local affairs may either receive support by viewing it as a necessary step towards resolving the conflict, or it may act as an impediment, in case involvement is in certain ways unsolicited and unregulated.

The manner, in which the national is represented and subsequently engaged with in the assessment of conflicts, imposes teleological interpretations of its underlying issues and limits their precise evaluations. As a result, the national understanding of local issues often fails to represent the situational conditionality and indeterminacy of the same and reduces understandings to an assessment based on the identification of the main actors and their motives, as well as aligning them with more familiar templates of larger narratives such as ' global terrorism', 'ethno-cultural conflict', 'anti-nationalism' etc. Such one-dimensional representations often lead to the recasting of the legitimacy of local issues by melding them with more powerful discourses, and in the process escalating its associated conflicts. What this leads to, is either a strengthening of the state against critics and challenges in employing unilateral and unregulated action in tackling such conflicts, or the consolidation of the legitimacy of local movements through its association with global or national grand-narratives. In either way, conflicts related to such concerns are intensified as a consequence. In cases where unregulated intervention

has become the norm of state involvement, the nature of the international or regional political systems plays a significant role in determining whether such interpolations are supported or criticised at a diplomatic level of state interaction.

Therefore, there emerges not a need to go beyond the national, but to delve deeper into its conceptual framework to disaggregate it into its constituent aggregations, to understand the manner in which they interact and subsequently impacted upon by each other to support the larger paradigmatic understanding of the state. This would open up prevalent discourses of the state and national, in the discipline of International Relations, to local perspectives whose conception till now had been relegated to being viewed as a consequence of the national and its interaction with different circumstances, rather an independent, autonomous, level of theoretical and practical engagement. Models and theories go only so far in establishing ideal representations of interaction and choice making, and predicting uniformities in patterns of interaction. However, the manner in which they have been employed in understanding decision making in International Relations is based on assumptions of what the state or nation represents. The problem with application of choice theories and models is the tendency to assume that the referent being analysed is an unchanging and static construct representative of singularity in its directions of action and intention. This when extrapolated on to the concept of the state becomes problematic as it disregards the presence of other, usually unheard voices emanating from within, and accepts only those representations that are visible in recognised spaces of state interaction and intercession. This brings to the fore another observation which recognises that basing suppositions on such an imagining of the state

completely relegates the understanding of choices available and those enacted, to only the formal institutional levels or spheres inducted into the abstraction of the national.

Therefore, there is a need to account for the multiple informal channels of interaction at other disaggregated levels of analysis that exist beyond the realm of the manifest and actionable national. Additionally, the manner in which choices are viewed also demands reconfiguration. Core assumptions of the discipline rely comprehensively on understanding the manner in which choices are constituted and the effects of their implementation at the national levels of interest actualisation. A shift of relevance is required to account for why such choices have been made and the manner in which they have been effected at the local level. This would provide a more holistic understanding of relations amongst actors which would go beyond choice-making and the consequences of the same, by establishing links with the manner in which the same choices are exercised and the rationale behind the same which goes beyond explanations of historical determinism. By looking into the local level as an alternative point of engagement can offset pre-held determinisms of the discipline. The perspectives reflected in International Relations discourses are often indicative of high levels of generalisations in its explanation of complex processes of interactions between actors both within and outside of the state. The overarching reliance that is placed on furnishing meta-narratives accounting for every aspect of a particular interaction or a process completely discounts the complexities underlying the same[76]. For instance, analysis of inter-state interactions is

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[76] The Realists also label as synthetic, the division of the domestic from the international, into what they claim to be a misleading dichotomy. Their primary argument is aimed towards realism's imposing meta-narrative which sustains the conventional categories and metrics of the discipline of international relations, thereby denying space to alternative perspectives on spatialisations of power to contest such structures and categories.

heavily reliant on perspectives drawn from state-centric perceptions of what those interactions entail. At this point the very ontological category of the state needs to be deconstructed in order to understand the implications and referents of these decisions which constitute the currency of both intra and inter-state decision making in the processes of the actualisation of its power. Therefore, finally, the language of International Relations discourses also needs to acquire a similar intonation of dis-aggregation in order to step away from the tendency to speak for the state, and instead account for the complexity of processes that underlie interactions with disaggregations both within and amongst states.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

The interpretation of conflicts in national and bilateral discourses gives the impression of being disconnected from assessments of the localised impacts and implications of their occurrences. The processes by which the manner of their resolution is determined by the state every so often, fail to account for issues beyond the consideration of a state's national interest. As this study elucidates, the engagement with border issues and conflicts within a framework of bilateral cooperation similarly ensues based on national interests. The arrogation of a 'local' issue by the state prompts their representation through a centrally articulated discourse based upon the identification of its underlying, causative factors. The resultant incidence of statist narratives of conflicts impact upon its perception not only at its immediate level of localised existence, but also in its bilateral engagement, obscuring extant, critical necessities for state intervention and local engagement.

These tendencies of categorisation are often more pronounced at the borders, whereby efforts are predominantly predicated on the centrality of the state(s) as the foremost organiser of social, political, and economic relations and orderings. The persistence of borderland conflicts beyond their resolution is frequently understood through the extension of the problematique of its territorial setting at the limits of the state. Similarly, statist evaluations of progressive change at the local level often remains confined to the restrictive impacts its intervention brings forth in halting recursions. These assessments

are based on a simple recognition of new policies or strategies implemented by the state, limited to only the ends it seeks to address. An outcome of this has been the absence of recognition of the changes that such interventions render upon local populations and spatialities which can potentially perpetuate or alter existent conflicts at the local level.

This study focused on the overlooked and hence unsettled issues surrounding the LBA signed between India and Bangladesh, to ascertain how and to what extent the bilateral agreement and the localised conflicts associated with the exchange of enclaves have impacted upon the relations at the local and bilateral levels. The connection between conflicts, emerging at the local level and its effect on the bilateral relations; the process by which national interests are articulated and if at all the 'national' is inclusive of the 'local' have also been discerned. During the study, the position of the narratives of residents of these former enclaves was also viewed against the state's discourse regarding the issue and its peripheral concerns to comprehend differences in statist and local perceptions of nationality, citizenship, and territoriality. The study also supplements prevailing construals of enclaves and the nature and scope of the stateless existence of its inhabitants as well, in academic and popular discourse.

Based on an ethnography of the former enclave residents of the India-Bangladesh borderland, the study observes that the 'local' emerges not only as the object of state-action, but as an ever-changing category, constituted of individuals and processes borne out of reiterated practices, adapting to the changing circumstances brought forth by the state's insertion at different junctures of its history. The study explores the variable perceptions and negotiations around the presence of 'stateless enclaves' at the local level,

and posits a critical insight to understand the disjuncture between statist enumerations of their existence and their localised manifestations that emerge through interactions and processes surrounding these spaces and their adjacent locales. The study has found that an understanding derived from local experiences in negotiating the changes brought forth by the bilateral resolution of their statelessness, allows for a more nuanced understanding of the categories and recognitions delimited by the state in its resolution processes; and subsequently reveal the limitations of such renderings of spaces, territory and identity that play out at the local level after the state's mediation. Establishing this allows for a critical exploration of prevalent local conflicts at the study sites, which the research posits, have persisted, albeit in different forms both at the local and bilateral levels, because of an absence of the 'local' from bilateral narratives of its resolution.

The research demanded a comprehensive exploration of local narratives to be able to initiate a process of its categorisation for comparison with the state's grand-narratives; hence interactions with local inhabitants presented itself as a requirement towards this end. The 'local' emerged as a key referent for exploring the multiple contestations the study has explored. The circumstantial limitations and expansions of state authority in these liminal spaces as exercised through its policies of border management are also studied in tandem with congruent local processes. Localised construals of the borderland and subsequently positioned engagements, the study argues, come to shape conflicts and interactions within the variegated borderland local and the nature of its interactions with the state. These engagements are not always reflective of statist positions on the border and its associated issues or conflicts, which are frequently based upon uniform conceptualisation premised on the unqualified capacity of the state to contain and control.

The 'local' subsequently comes to reflect the variations of divergent historical and locational realities of different borderland locales in engaging with the border and its various realities. The research therefore recognises the need to extend the analysis of borderlands beyond statist framings of its existence.

The findings are engaged with in detail in the subsequent sections. They have been divided thematically to respond to the gaps in existing theoretical frameworks used in understanding the bilateral disputes and its resultant impacts at the local level; and the implications of local conflicts on Bilateralism.

Local Obscurantism in International Relation Discourse

Bilateral state action is often presumed to be based upon securing conditions for interaction that emerge from convergences of their respective national interests. This argument can be premised upon the position of national interests as the foundational axes upon which inter-state interactions are principally centred. The significance accorded to the same in directing inter-state relations, can be attributed to its centrality in Realist discourses which have transposed most understandings and applications of the concept in International Relations. Representations of the domain of the national as preponderant and superseding of other auxiliary conditions tend to assert teleological and conclusive interpretations of issues; at the same time inhibiting precise appraisals of the same. Subsequently, narratives evinced from such a lens obscure the conditional and indeterminate nature of these concerns, often running the risk of essentialisation as well.

In the case of bilateral conflicts, such approximations tend to dissociate its deeper, underlying issues from the realities of its localised existence. This de-necessitates the

need for examining issues in their present spatial and social context; instead retrofitting them to considerations of the national intellection as represented by the state. The consequence of such identificatory waylaying confuses a more precise estimation of the necessities for intervention. By tying down understandings of local issues to abstractions of national interests diverts attention away from the locally articulated necessities for state intercession. Therefore, even when the state asserts the success of its resolution policies, its scope remains confined to selected issues, which may not be the same as those articulated by the local levels, as necessitating intermediation. The logics of bureaucratic rationality that have come to characterise most policies in the area of state security and border regulation have tended to be essentialist in their understandings, in that they were not socially derived/constructed, but instead have been top-down impositions and monolithic orthodoxies which are not discursively produced. However, this research posits that the social construction of reality in any space must transcend macro-consensuses in order promote bottom-up anti-essentialism, which becomes necessary in understanding the intricacies of local dynamics, whether at the borders or in sites of conflict.

Demarcations of national and local are not by any means constant or distinctly identifiable. Policy options surrounding national considerations of bilateral or multilateral alliance formation, perceptions of security dilemmas are substantially influenced by the way states are oriented domestically. Pluralists and liberalists have contested the Realist statist perspective in this regard, by establishing the extent to which a state's orientation in the international sphere is influenced by domestic forces. Post-modernist and post-structuralist scholars have also criticised Realism, and more particularly neo-Realist

postulates (Devetak, 1996). These disagreements with Realism can be viewed as an outcome of the theory's inability to explain the processes of subjectification that usually underwrites the way power functions at every level of operation, thereby creating its own exclusive domain of operation and functioning which is separable from considerations of the domestic, provincial, and even the local. Critical perspectives have also labelled as artificial, the Realist division of the domestic from the international, into what they claim to be a misleading dichotomy. The primary argument, collated from these alternative frameworks of interpretation, is aimed towards Realism's imposing of a meta-narrative which sustains the conventional categories and metrics of the discipline, its epistemic hegemony deifies and reifies suppositions as fundamental truths underlying relations amongst states across temporalities (Ashley, 1984; Walker, 1993).

Attesting to this exclusion, critical theorists argued that the Realists' discernment of the state constituted international structure as an invariable and axiomatic feature of international relations, denied credence to other material and social variables that held the key to understanding the genealogy of the structure itself as well as the possibility of change within it (Cox, 1981, 1983).The study advocates bridging this synthetic disjuncture in the Realist variegations of power, and through its findings shows that through an exploration of local issues, arising out of larger national and bilateral concerns provides a comprehensive understanding of ground realities. To view state power, either as an abstract notion of authority manifesting in the form of prepollency in the domains of security, politics and economics makes for a limited reading of its implications. To understand state power, whether in its unilateral or bilateral capacities, its interaction at the local level where the implications of such actions are effected becomes necessary.

The study problematises the Realist overlap, by inquiring into the underlying supplemental considerations that support this theoretical supposition.

In fact, the Realist overlap between the national and the local is reliant on certain factors for its convergence and therefore is not self-evident. This stands all the truer when we view bilateral conflict at the borders as the issue around which state interaction comes to be based. These considerations range from the geographical site of the conflict, extant relations between states in case the conflict overlaps across international borders, and most significantly the convergences existing between the local and the national, manifesting in the most discernible form as partisan convergence. These may not be representative of an overlap in terms of convergences of opinions and perspectives surrounding multiple issues between the national and local levels, the possibility of which remains indefinable given all the conditions that would have to be met to establish a total conjunction. Therefore, a separation of the national and local becomes significant in understanding the multiplicity of narratives, interests and issues that subsist at various levels, surrounding a root cause, issue or in this case, conflicts. Alternatively, there also emerges a need to consider the local as bearing implications upon national perceptions and processes, and therefore its importance in bilateral discourse necessitates a critical point of engagement. However, these separations are not always abided by in understanding and responding to conflicts domestically or even in a collaborative capacity with other states when such issues spill across international borders.

To understand the overlaps between the national and the local in the practicalisation of bilateralism, the study has chosen to focus on the impacts of such interventions at the

borders. The interactions between the local and the national become apparent at the limits of the state, owing to constancy in negotiations that are observed to exist between statist considerations for the securitisation of the space, and local necessities for adaptation in maintaining or altering quotidian recurrences. The centrality of statist foci in addressing local disputes at the borders is indicative of the centrality of state authority in determining the necessity of intervention. This is well captured in securitisation discourses which point towards the dislocation of public opinion and the suspension of local politics through state interlocution in conflict zones. The assumption of a 'local' issue by the state often prompts their representation through a centrally articulated discourse based upon the state's identification of the underlying, causative factors. The prevalence of statist narratives of issues and conflicts at the local level impact upon its perception not only at its immediate level of existence, but also at the level of its bilateral engagement, obscuring extant requirements for state intervention and local engagement.

The resultant gap between the advocated and actual necessities of resolution at the ground, may lead to the persistence and emergence of local tensions, subsequent to its 'settlement' at the national and bilateral levels. In instances whereby state intercession becomes an undeniable possibility, its policies and methods come to be acclimated to a limited transcription of extant conditions, which is often not representative of local conditions. Consequently, the possibilities of repudiation from localised perceptions of the conflict appear to be limited, if not completely absent especially at the borders where the reach of state power is traditionally augmented. The obscurantism underlying perceptions of conflicts that are closely related to considerations of national interests therefore posits questions on its representativeness of the situation on ground. As a

consequence, the efficacy of such state-led resolution processes belies the persistence of altered conditions of conflict at the local level, or localised processes of resolution that may have emerged in the interim to stabilise local circumstances.

Local as a Counterpoise to Statist Essentialism

The continuity and absence of the state at the borders and the emergence of the Local constitutes a key focal point of the study. To contextualise the significance of these fluctuations, the emergence of the local must be viewed as a rational consequence of the changing nature of international relations after the end of the Cold War. Integration both within the region and at an international level became one of the key outcomes of globalisation because of the intensity with which its associated transnational forces had come to subvert the salience of territorial borders as the limits of state sovereignty. The rise of advanced industrial democracies in the wake of globalisation posed a challenge to rigid, territorialised conceptions of sovereignty, whereby it was often readily abandoned as part of the state's efforts to integrate itself into the global framework of exchanges; to gain from its associated trade flows and capital mobility. The border and the state, under the influences of these transnational economic forces, stand transformed.

Contemporary understandings of the border offer a window into understanding the shifts in the nature of territorial politics amongst states and at the local levels. Such shifts have, to an extent, negated both the Realist and Globalist views on the border. The Realists' emphasis on the primacy of military conflict in shaping border realities and security (continuity) and the globalist assumption that the transnational character of economic, cultural, and political forces only provide space for a less interventionist state (decline)

clearly failed to account the way territorial controls have come to be reconfigured by the infusion of local actors and forces into the mix. Despite such changes the need to maintain the picture of control that borders signify has remained of prime importance, to maintain the territorial legitimacy and diffusion of state power to its furthest limits. Therefore, instead of pointing out a loss of control, forays into its understanding the emergence of these new trends should be guided by inquiries into the ways in which the idea and the power of the state has been re-conceptualised and reconfigured in its contemporary functioning, and in its interactions with its variegated localised existences. Even in peripheral spaces such as borders and its adjacent borderlands, where traditional depictions of state power have been classified as unyielding and rigid.

Given the variability of understandings that permeate understandings of the border (Newman, 2011) and the identities, notions of access and mobilities it generates, there emerges a need to look deeper into the more localised framings of the space. The recognition of a variegated borderland locale can offset the vertical politics of state power through challenging the territorial orders and hegemonic ideas about the purpose of its politics of regulation and securitisation. At this juncture, border ethnographies become relevant in highlighting the agency of immigrants, outsiders, and aliens; categorisations which operate in demarcating individuals and communities that lie beyond the state's identificatory categories, and the immobilisation strategies that deny them agency. In the process of analysing such variances in experiences of citizenship and belonging, critical border ethnographies reveal the connections between the management of the other by the state and the functioning of deep seated and localised, economic, political, and cultural processes that maintain the illusion of a coherent state.

By opening this discussion to alternative points of reference in understanding the impacts of the locale, the findings of the study brings to light the unqualified, epistemic and paradigmatic dependence on the state and the national as the most preponderant categories of engagement. Narratives arising out of local experiences can stand in contrast to national narratives surrounding spatially localised conflicts and compare the standard practise of ascribing to representations that posit such conflicts as localised manifestations of larger, national or regional productions. This becomes very relevant in understanding complex social phenomena like conflicts, wherein multiple narratives exist not only in its space of operation wherein conflict actors interact with one another, but also within the realm of perception encompassing opinions, sentiments, and perspectives of the national population regarding the same.

In prioritising one reading of the conflict over the other, in this case, the supersession of the local by the national; the centrality of statist discourses in this regard becomes more apparent. The essentialisms underlying their perception, are never truly representative of the quotidian realities they give rise to in their localised manifestations. In fact, if one maps out perceptions and experiences generated by a particular conflict at the local level, its discernments will be subject to alterations in relation to a subject's proximity to the site of its operation. The texturing of discernments by national and local narratives becomes much more apparent when one forays into the various processes and adaptations, they give rise to, and mapping the variability in the incidences of replications and supplementing of state processes at the local level, mobilisations for or against statist essentialisms and subsequent policy interventions, and local shifts in subjectivities of identification of different groups inhabiting the space.

The research argues that for long, studies based on understanding inter-state action, especially with regard to border issues have prioritised a statist perspective where "local" perceptions and narratives underlying the same have been relegated to the footnotes of analyses. In the case of South Asia, re-orientating theoretical responsiveness towards local perspectives is important for two reasons. Firstly, the artificial demarcations and categories that have been overlaid by Realist analyses on understandings and practicalisation of state action have either suspended or obscured the existence of fluid territorial boundaries, multiple identities and easy transboundary movements, especially in the South Asian context (Uddin, 2019; Canefe, 2019). The obscuration of the local within state aggregations has positioned the state in a manner that has allowed it to assume centrality in all theoretical and practical conditions of its authority. But the concealing of the local from analysis does not amount to its complete dissolution. Now, as most transborder interactions have come to be moderated through the state, one can trace the manner in which the local responds to and negotiates with the state's schema of citizenship, belonging and territoriality in its quotidian cross-border socio-cultural, economic, and political interactions. Local responses to the same may vary from resistance to adaptation, depending upon the context of such interactions.

Secondly, to assume the "local" as a reflexive category or merely as beneficiaries of state policies would constitute a misjudgement of its adaptability. While the state has established itself as the primary source of community identification and affiliation, there operates informally at the local level alternatively constituted forms of belonging, which in certain cases predate the establishment of international borders and even the state. As an alternative, intermediate category whose operation complicates the binarised norms of

inclusion and exclusion instituted by the modern state; the 'local' can hold the key to understanding the convergences and gaps in national perceptions and outcomes of intervention with regard to issues arising out of specific locales. The interaction between 'local' and 'national' acuities opens up the scope for understanding not only the impacts on the former, but how local impacts go on to shape national and also bilateral designs as well. The study builds upon the growing literature on the emergence of the local as an important referent in understanding spaces and processes that were once exclusively defined by and related to the state and its functions; and situates itself amidst the emergent alternative discourses on the understanding of the border and its surrounding spatialities.

Paradox of Possession

The issues surrounding the exchange of border enclaves between India and Bangladesh engaged with by the research stands as a critical juncture for understanding the predominance of national interest discourses in the practicalisation of bilateralism. In the South Asian context, issues of territory have historically constituted one of the key axes of interactions between states, both cooperative and conflictual (Murayama, 2006). However, in this context, the bilateral resolution of the enclave issue has been viewed as model resolutionary practice, in deciding a final status upon the exchange of trans-territorial spaces and its inhabitants between India and Bangladesh.

The enclave issue has been categorised principally as a bilateral territorial concern, through the course of its engagement with the state, up till the point of its resolution. However, the local experiences of the communities inhabiting these spaces and

navigating through the complexities of their 'stateless' existence belie such a simplistic classification. An inquiry into critical insights of the nature of their extant fraternal relations with non-enclave locales, their shared linguistic and cultural affinities, collaborative adaptations and adjustments to state power, are all testament of the existence of a more variegated conflict at the local levels. Such discernments allow us to bring forth individual experiences, local perceptions, and adaptations as an alternative point of engagement, alongside statist discourses surrounding the process of resolution of the issue and the subsequent integration of these spaces into national territory. The local narratives engaged by the study, challenges the generalised categorisations of the enclave dispute and its underlying conflicts by the state. The inclusion of the local as a supplementary frame of analysing the bilateral enclave conflict opens up perspectives towards understanding the issue; that have previously lacked engagement in applied and theoretical construals. The manner in which enclaves have been viewed through statist articulations, in complete isolation from existent local histories, is also representative of the gaps in understanding these spaces and its inhabitant communities. As such, considerations underlying the impacts of the conflict on the bilateral relations between the two states and also the impact of the exchange on the local population have been conspicuously absent from analyses of circumstances prior and subsequent to the formal bilateral resolution of the issue in 2015. When accommodated into the framework of analysis, as this study has, the vaunted success of the approach can be debated upon.

As engaged with by the research, the primacy of territorialised sovereignty in the conceptualisation of South Asian spatiality can be positioned as a significant theoretical obstacle which impeded the resolution for the bilateral enclave dispute. In effect, the

settlement of this issue represents a point of departure from the historical rigidities underlying territorial configurations and transfers in the region. The peculiarity of the enclave issue itself also stands out, in the sense that the territorial arrangements necessitated through bilateral negotiations required only a notional transfer or recognition of sovereignty. Whereby, the *de facto* claims of the state on these enclaves changed to *de jure* affirmations[77]. The extension of affiliation towards these trans-territorial spaces which has constituted a trope in regional territorial politics also appears to be significantly extenuated in this context. Given the complications underlying the option of extending governance beyond state borders, a transfer appeared more suited to the circumstances.

The official wording as an exchange thereby becomes misleading, as it premises the process on notions of originary possession of the state over such spaces. Therefore, the application of notions of statelessness only extends to the people inhabiting these spaces and not the territory itself, in ways preserving the state's geography by dispossessing the people of their spatial associations. This becomes interesting as the underlying narratives of the issue emerging from statist and bilateral narratives divorces and at the same time reinforces itself with traditionalist notions of territory and power. Through this process of 'exchange' the states appear to relent on its 'rightful' territorial claims beyond its borders, and accept what is presented as a rational conclusion to the ongoing, territorial dispute. The interchangeable usage of integration and exchange in the context of this issue has obfuscated not only the point of entry of the state but also the steps taken to assimilate

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[77] The transfer of Dahagram-Angarpota exists as an obverse of these considerations, whereby the allowance for the extension of governance beyond sovereign borders was recognised as a viable solution. Correspondingly, its case also stands as it was the only embedded enclave that was not exchanged.

these previously stateless spaces and its inhabitants in localised perceptions and policy interventions. When viewed as an exchange or a transfer, perceptions of these spaces come to be underlined by an acknowledgement of possession by virtue of their territorial embedding. However, this position contradicts the absolute nature of statelessness associated with the enclaves prior to their exchange, and the recognition of the other state's claims as merely perfunctory. At the same time, the existence of complications arising out of their statelessness is also representative of their isolation from the state, despite the *de facto* recognition of these spaces as a part of their own territory. At the same time, when categorised as integration, the bilateral resolution for the enclave issue comes to be premised on a need to establish parity between the enclave and non-enclave locales; the absence of which has not only prompted localised adaptations, but at the same time reinforced their existing inequalities.

The multiplicity of affiliations operating within the enclaves, as well as the variances of interactions they have given rise to at the local level complicates linear understandings of state geodesy. In its conceptualisation, the attribution of significance to the notions of territorial contiguity and its parallelism with sovereign power transformed the idea of the nation state with its precisely delineated borders into an assumed normativity, in the organisation of territorial space. Consequently, contemporary geopolitical representations of enclaves compared to the standard of the bounded nation state, have similarly revolved around efforts to rationalise their unclassifiable existence in an increasingly defined and bounded world. The existence of multiple forms of belonging and affiliations within the enclaves lends to their inherent criticality in understanding the mutability of perceptions and their causal exigencies that exist at the borderland. In essence, these spaces have

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exhibited a wide array of configurations that are mostly dissipated across borderland spatialities and temporalities. Their history and current state of existence, therefore provides us with a critical juncture to engage with the evolving nature of the local and its interactions and contestations with the state.

The reclassification of enclaves and its inhabitants and subsequent insertion into the state's fold have therefore constituted only an exchange of responsibilities associated with their governance and management, previously un-recognised owing to their unsettled status. Such processes of classification therefore principally boil down to the national construals of the issue and the conditions of a bilateral resolution as had been outlined through the negotiations between India and Bangladesh. The top-down essentialisms of territoriality and identity that have underscored the bilateral approach restricted the public lens of perception to only those issues; and subsequently attributed generalisability to the effectiveness of the means. However, the dissociation of the problem itself from its underlying subjectivities, and the socialities that have interacted with and continually transformed the issue have evinced solutions that have achieved transformations only at the level of categorisation, and not materialities. The reasons behind the persistence of issues in these locales can be understood as a consequence of the exchange not being followed by more comprehensive processes of integration. The absence of local considerations from the bilateral resolution process becomes conspicuous when viewed in relation to the absence of integrative policies subsequent to the exchange, the impacts of which have manifested in the form of multiple local contestations and adaptations with the state itself, the details of which this research has captured.

The paradox of extending the state's possessive affiliations towards these erstwhile stateless territories and peoples is revealed in the several delays that inhibited a successful resolution of the dispute till 2015. At the bilateral level, the resolution necessitated exchanging both territories and populations over which these states, as well as the adjacent locales have exercised and expressed varied forms of possession through their interactions. This, as the research has brought forth, existed in the form of historical affinities drawn from a common caste identity; and also as social and political affinities that emerged out of a shared necessity to bypass their specific circumstantial challenges and also achieve common goals. This assertion of the study is evidenced by the precedence of local integrative processes prior to the state's official entry in 2015. The ability of the local to adapt and also to exhibit resilience at different points in its engagement with the state(s); in comprehending their liminality and the complexities of their unique spatial configuration emerge as a function of its tractable and fungible constitution. The instantaneity with which such negotiations had carried forth at the local level between the enclave and non-enclave residents, and with other state and non-state local actors is captured in the study's accounts of local adaptations to national, bilateral and local conflicts. These local narratives provide an alternative perspective on what has been popularly described as a bilateral territorial dispute. However, this perspective, one that is textured by the consideration of national interests, obscures the local and its residents as a unit of engagement.

The local therefore emerges a critical point of departure from the popular readings of the enclave dispute, premised on the state's categorisation and classification of the issue. Perspectives derived from the local offset statist essentialisations that have been

perpetuated through its discursive mechanisms, in interpreting and representing a conflict. They provide a deeper insight into ground realities, revealing the impacts of such interpretations as they play out at the local level, in colouring perceptions of its constituent actors and defining the nature of their relationships. The study has utilised these conceptions as a framework through which the implications of bilateral action at the local level can be gauged. Conversely, the impacts of local conflicts that have emerged as an outcome of state intercession (or, lack thereof); upon extant relations between states can also be ascertained through a local lens. If these impacts remain uncontained by the states' borders, it may possibly lead to a reshuffling of the conditions upon which a convergence of interests has been established. Monitoring the local can therefore emerge as effective litmus for understanding the cycle of impacts that affect the domains of the local and bilateral.

Re-evaluating Statist Essentialisms through a 'Local' Lens

The key objectives of this study arise from an attempt to understand the impacts of inter-state mediation on locally operating conflicts and the implications of the same on the nature of their bilateral relations. The semantics underlying resolution processes often obscure the operation of tendencies contributing to shifts in the nature and form of local conflicts subsequent to the state's mediation. Consequently, issues that persist are often viewed as dissociated from preceding localised conditions, which subsequently impedes their effective resolution. The persistence of such conflicts also impacts upon inter-state relations as well, as such issues come to be subsumed under categories of understanding and perception which align with the nature of relations prevalent between states. Based on this premise, a case study of the Land Boundary Agreement between India and

Bangladesh regarding the resolution of the enclave dispute was selected to understand such processes of exclusion of the local, from national and bilateral narratives in evincing strategies of conflict resolution. The timeline of their bilateral relationship reveals the underlying perceptions that guided their interactions and negotiations, shaped by their history of shared conflicts. The study thereby has attempted to bring forth a shift in the theoretical framework of understanding conflict and the efficacy of bilateralism as a mitigation or resolution strategy. By engaging with the local as an essential referent in the study of International Relations, the research aims at expanding upon traditional interpretive frameworks of the state that have been at the forefront of understanding conflicts and the intentionality of state-action, especially at the borders. The preponderance of the state in discussions on inter-state conflict has based understandings and processes related to its interpretation and resolution on rigid abstractions of power, interests, and authority. As this study posits, such frameworks can prove to be limited in their representation of ground realities, as interpretations derived from the same tend to be dissociated from narratives of local experiences and interactions with its extant circumstances.

The case of the Land Boundary Agreement signed between India and Bangladesh, presented itself as a suitable point of inquiry. Given the multiple issues that were sought to be addressed by this bilateral agreement, mostly concerning the issue of territory, the process exhibited different phases through which congruence of interests was evinced, leading to its eventual ratification. Through its different phases, the statist perceptions of territory underwent several shifts, in response to variations in the necessity of the agreement as a propeller for individual national interests. The bilateral negotiations that

led to re-conceptualisations of rigid understandings of territorialised power and authority paved the way for the exchange of enclaves. The resolution of the enclave dispute, evinced through a re-negotiated comprehension of its associated stakes on the fulfilment of individual national interests of the two states, overlooked issues that were contingent to local experience of navigating through extant challenges of statelessness and isolation. Consequently, the Land Boundary Agreement despite being projected as a success overlooked a whole host of issues associated with the bilateral enclave dispute, at the local level – ranging from the complexities of an un-categorised stateless existence, problems of access, and related barriers to local mobilities and opportunities – in its resolution process. The study identifies these conflicts and traces the course of their emergence and the impacts they have had on local existence, and on India-Bangladesh relations.

The localised manifestation of the impacts emerging from the protracted nature of the dispute's bilateral resolution presented itself in historical and concurrent cycles of conflict, adaptation and resilience that were captured in local experiences. Additionally, an inquiry into the conditions underlying the cycle of national interest convergence between India and Bangladesh leading up to the ratification of the LBA provides an insight into the impacts of the local on the bilateral. This problem was approached through an analysis of the variable perceptions of the state and its bilateral policies from different perspectives of the larger local rhetoric and mapping the localised impacts of their cooperative and conflictual interactions. In the context of this study, the patterns of cross border dependencies, nebulous identities, localised substitutions of state institutions, processes and identifications all emerged as challenging concerns for the

respective states to reckon with. The presence and operation of such local processes challenged the primacy of the state and also the absolutism that underwrote the circumstances of its absence from the enclaves. These localised forms of supersession emerged as concerns for the respective states, which given their overlapping nature, necessitated bilateral consensus to override and counter. Therefore, its impacts can be traced through the disruptions in the cycle of convergence within India-Bangladesh bilateralism and its subsequent impacts on their extant relations.

In doing so, this approach emphasises the implications of the local on national and bilateral essentialisms of power, territory, and authority that govern its discursive and practical emergences. In this context, the study makes certain critical interventions that prompt a re-evaluation of the categories that preceding efforts towards understanding the process of their integration have been considered secure. In doing so, the attributions accompanying these concepts are also reconsidered, thereby positing an alternative interpretation of the enclave dispute, the resultant bilateral resolution process, and its subsequent impacts. Therefore, through this framework a new perspective of the enclave dispute is derived, one that considers people at the local level and their interactions as the units and focus of analysis.

The 'Local', for that reason, is introduced as an alternative framework through which the enclave dispute and the resultant bilateral resolution are interpreted. This constitutes an essential point of theoretical intervention posited by the study; in offsetting the teleology of statist essentialisms; and reveals their deficiencies in interpreting and responding to complex, social phenomenon. In such interpretations, the lens of the state appears to be oriented towards responding to the contingencies of attaining national interests. The local

therefore comes to be relegated as a category of an administrative disaggregation, rather than an active socio-political component that interacts with its residing circumstances. Therefore, by attributing agency to the local in understanding local conflicts, this study not only recognises, but also engages with this classification as an active element in shaping the socio-political realities of a particular conflict setting. The 'local' therefore emerges through an assessment of the narratives and experiences of the individuals inhabiting and interacting with the space and its circumstances of existence. If utilised as a counterpoise to statist essentialisms which tend to suffer from reductiveness in their conceptualisation of agency and outcome of individual and collective action; often understood in consonance with state behaviour; the local can bring forth a variegated understanding of reality, cutting across such generalisations.

By engaging with narratives surrounding the conflict, emanating from the experiences of the local level; the study acknowledges that dynamics of power can often obscure such perspectives and processes from dominant conceptualisations of space and its constituent social configurations. This emerges as a gap in comprehending the realities of the conflict, one that is drawn from the experiences of the individuals navigating through its contingencies on an everyday basis. Instead, what we are left with are the essentialisms of the state which attempt to flatten multifarious interpretations of issues that may subsist at numerous levels of experiential and perceptive engagement. In engaging with these narratives, it becomes more apparent that the linearity and generalisability of statist discourse concerning border disputes is representative of its own hegemony that underlies such deductions. In this regard, it becomes significant to escape the trappings of state power, to independently categorise referents which have predominantly been interpreted

in conjunction to the telos of the state. By advocating the adoption of an experiential lens to understand the same evinces a more comprehensive understanding of ground realities. This approach positions social processes not as functions of their subsequent conceptualisations; but as dynamic categories textured by the subjectivities of individual and community experiences. The confounding of processes and conceptualisations cuts through the variability underlying quotidian experiences, prioritising only epistemological concerns instead of regarding their underlying polyvalence. It is therefore futile to view concepts as a set of functions. Conversely, in analysing their intrinsic fluidity and variability as essential to the functions they perform, opens up the scope for undertaking explorations that are reliant on observable experiences and localised contingency, rather than assumed normativity.

Recomposing Conflict and Settlement from a 'Local' Perspective

The case of the LBA between India and Bangladesh, as this study has shown, carries two broad narratives, identified in the research under the categories of national and local. The categories have been employed in explaining the differences in perceptions and experiences of the conflict through the timeline of its settlement. The variances underlying the discernments can be extended to the conceptualisation of the issue of the conflict, identification of key actors and in delimiting the spatialisations of its impacts. The polyvalent nature of the key notional and spatial referents in understanding the enclave dispute reveals the implications of positionality and subjectivity in experiencing the processes they outline. This duality becomes all the more apparent at the borders where the local and state are caught in a perpetual struggle to negotiate its underlying liminality.

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Accordingly, the perceptions of conflict and settlement are viewed not in unanimous agreement of its respective conditions and outcomes, but through the conditionalities of their specific perceptions of intentions and objectives. Therefore, the categorisation of the same is also impacted upon by subjectivities. The study has presented how the impacts of conflict are variably experienced by the state and the local level. Subsequently, the perception of extant circumstances produced by the state and local actors as either disruptive or advantageous varies accordingly. This is dependent upon what constitutes their respective interests. Unlike the state, whose interests are discernible and precise, the mutable ethos of the local presents a more unformulated interpretation of its common interests. This can be evidenced upon the rigid territorial claims over the stateless enclaves that both states exercised through the course of their bilateral engagement on the issue. In contrast, the local remained adaptive to the changes brought forth in their lives by the vacillations of bilateral interest convergence cycles and regional conflicts. The local's interests were situated in a framework of necessity and at times, immediacy, which warranted quicker turnarounds on deadlocks on interests being negotiated between its constituent actors. The states' rigidity of claims remained constant through their bilateral engagement and only acquiesced under conditions of mutual pliability over the same. The rigidity of statist concerns, in the context of this study, can be viewed as an outcome of the territorial peripheralisation of the dispute itself. Under such circumstances, the interests of the local can never remain constant, and are continuously adjusting in response to the state's intercession. Localised adaptation to a conflict setting therefore varies significantly across its timeline of settlement by the state. This has been elucidated by the study through its exploration of local processes through which the state

was bypassed, substituted, engaged with and even resisted. These processes were also prompted by fluctuations in the pliability underlying national interests which consequently impacted upon the constitution of local interests. The same trends in shifting interests can also be observed in bilateral negotiations surrounding other issues between India and Bangladesh, if one can unpack it from the rigid, statist motifs on power, territory, and population that undergird their representations.

Successively, the perceptions of resolution were also observed to be contingent upon the interests of its negotiating actors, both at the state and local levels. The local perception of settlement was based upon negotiations between the enclave and non-enclave residents, and their respective interactions with the state in navigating through the realities of their complex stateless and peripheral existences. On the other hand, the resolution of the dispute brought forth by the bilateral agreement was negotiated between the states in relation to their respective national interests. For the state, resolution constituted a complete settlement of all outstanding bilateral border disputes, of which the exchange of enclaves constituted a primary concern. These two understandings of settlement are representative of the interests they signify, alongside divergent views on immediacy and necessity, and the overall preponderance of the state over the local. The gap between the two presents a point of theoretical intervention, in recognising the impact of the local in what is essentially regarded as a national or bilateral conflict. The study in this regard engages with an alternative framework of resolution that recognises local actors and processes as key elements in its attainment, in which it brings forth a stablising influence at the local level prior to the point of state intervention or bilateral resolution. Such an understanding interprets conflicts as complex, social phenomena,

underlying which rest the multiple undercutting stakes and interests of its numerous actors. It avoids the essentialism of viewing conflicts and their resolution being separated by the reconciliation of divergent interests; and acknowledges the need for constant negotiation and engagement between the primary stakeholders, at the national and local levels in evincing a solution that is both adaptable and adjustable to its requirements.

The authority of the state to securitise the borderscape, dissociates the local from the locale, and consequently subsumes it under its own aegis. In the instance of a conflict, this may manifest in disruptions to local mobilities, participation, identifications and perceptions of the state. The study has brought forth the adaptive capacity of the local, and how often it steps in as an informal subsidiary of state power; as it mirrors the state's role by substituting its absence or inability to effectively interpose in particular instances. The interventions drawn through local capacities although not backed by the quantum of resources and power wielded by the state; their production and performance carry analogous levels of legitimacy in localised perceptions. These localised arbitrations besides being undercut by hierarchies of power are arrived at through continued interactions between different local groups inhabiting the space and subject to similar conditions of life. The dialectical development of such adaptations through the history of local existence is afforded more legitimacy in contrast to the point-source intervention of the state in resolving a bilateral or national issue. This is apparent in the nature of the relationship between the enclave and non-enclave residents and their respective interactions with the state which has been outlined by the study.

Therefore, the need to view ideas of conflict and resolution from an alternative point of reference, one that is accessible to inquiry, emerged as a necessary means towards

answering the queries this study has examined. In the context of the Land Boundary Agreement, the persistence of local conflicts subsequent to the signing of the bilateral agreement points to the existence of multiple discernments of the issue, which in its most simplified form exists at the local and national levels. The study has engaged with the polyvalent nature of the local as well, and how their perceptions are not uniformly in opposition to the state but varies in accordance with their proximity to the site of conflict. These variations of the localised experiences and perceptions have also contributed significantly to discursive deadlocks which essentially tie up issues to questions of agreement or conflict with the state and its ethos. As a result, issues, and conflicts, especially so at the borders come to be locked up in affective narratives of nationalism, and subjectivities of moralised perception, which distances popular and statist concerns from the objective requirements of intervention. Under such circumstances, the immediate local emerges as a necessary point of inquiry; to understand the requirements and impacts of mediation and resolution in a manner dissociated from considerations of adhering to intellections of the state power and its associated normative subjectivities.

Impacts of the Local on Bilateral Relations

Looking into the history of India-Bangladesh bilateralism, the prevalence of statist essentialisms underlying perceptions of shared disputes becomes apparent in the absence of considerations of their individual and localised impacts. Persistent bilateral issues between the two countries have mostly eluded scrutiny of the local level, and even in engaging with the experiences of its inhabitants as a means to gauge or even review the necessity and scheme of intercession or even its effectiveness. For instance, issues of illegal immigration, cattle smuggling, and disputes over the sharing of river waters have

all been presented in parabolic schematics of underlying national interests. The enclave dispute similarly fell perfectly into the parable of territorial possession, and such perceptions came to dominate the domains of public, political and academic engagement with the issue. The bearing of such schematics on popular perceptions can be traced by a complete absence of engagement with the multitude of social, economic and political issues that the resident communities of these erstwhile stateless spaces and their adjacent locales continue to engage with even today.

In the study, the assessment of narratives of the national and bilateral from the perspective of the local has revealed the critical gaps existent in the perception of and reaction to the enclave issue at the study sites and by the state. The persistence of local conflicts regarding identity, access to the state, issues of rehabilitation and new inequalities that have emerged subsequent to the exchange of enclaves questions the predominant national and bilateral narratives regarding the success of the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement. The apparent disjuncture that emerges between the two counterpoises, that is, the local and the national, necessitates questions regarding the implications of state power on the narrativisation of a conflict and its repercussions on the public and private realms of its perception.

The insertion of the local as a supplementary framework of interpretation altogether questions the centrality of the state in identifying and mediating in conflicts, especially those that spill over shared borders. The claim opposes the Realist rudimentary of state primacy over all domains of its power, manifested at its limits in the form of visible structures of bordering. However, the concavity of the conceptualisation of interactions between space and state power precludes the most significant category underlying its

manifestation, that is, the inhabitants inhabiting the space. It is through their interactions with the extant conditions of conflict that embraces their everyday, rendering such conditions and negotiations as quotidian. For the state, such conditions appear as intractable challenges to their power, which demands adjustment to its authoritative primacy, either by policy or by force.

In the state's failure to engage with the local impacts of the conflict, it distances any assessment of the impact its intercession will have on its constituent socialities and their dynamics of interaction. This separates the conflict or the overarching issue from its stakeholders, spanning a wide category of local, informal and state actors who reify the conditions of conflict through their interactions and relations. Therefore, by precluding local narratives from processes of understanding and responding to conflict, the state's resolution policies come to be premised on its own essentialist understanding of the issue; one derived from the considerations of its power and interests. The research positions this finding on the persistence of multiple conflicts at the local level which it studies, subsequent to the formal resolution of the enclave dispute through a bilateral agreement.

The persistence of conflicts at the local level in this regard, was indicative of the absence of the local as a point of engagement in the bilateral resolution process. The primacy of national interest in directing such processes becomes apparent in the exclusion of considerations of the impact that the presence of stateless enclaves had at the local level. Issues and conflicts that were mediated by local processes which emerged through interactions between enclave and non-enclave locals to stabilise their conditions of life, were absent from analyses of its potential localised impacts. Instead, the resolution of the issue was predicated on an attempt to rationalise their existence within national territory

through integration and conferring citizenship to its inhabitants. This essentially led to a resolution of the issue at a bilateral level, given that the primary concern of possibly managing trans-territorial holdings was eliminated by the clause of exchange. Subsequent to the exchange, local issues were now transferred on to their national and respective state governments for effective management and intervention. However, the impacts of their persistence continue to be sensed at a bilateral level presently.

The proximity of these local sites of conflict to the international border between India and Bangladesh has had a significant impact on the subsequent categorisation of their underlying contestations. This particular condition has presented states with the ability to conjoin divergent issues under its requirements for border and borderland management; as the manifestation of its pervasive authoritative control over the territorial limits of its power (Fassin, 2011). Consequently, even after the transference of authority of issues and conflicts emanating from the erstwhile enclaves to the national and provincial authorities of the state, they remain effectively unaddressed. The vaunted success of the resolution process obscured the necessity for further interlocution in these spaces to determine the reasons prompting the persistence of local conflicts. Instead, conflicts emergent from locales containing erstwhile enclaves, now come to be viewed in relation to the template issues of the common border shared between the states – namely, illegal immigration, smuggling, encroachment, to name a few. To categorise border conflicts as such makes for a reductive understanding of their underlying issues, the factors that prompted their emergence, and their subsequent impacts at the local and national levels. But, as this study argues, these outlined leitmotifs of border conflict are not essentially indicative of the conflict itself, but simply a manifestation of its extant circumstances. Therefore, in

order to understand the reasons contributing to any issue or conflict identified by the state, it becomes imperative to delve into the specificities of its emergence. For that, an assessment of its spatial and social context necessitates engagement, which this study has categorised under the masthead of the 'local'.

The study understands the 'local' through the narratives and quotidian experiences of its inhabitants, and the divergence with the 'national/bilateral' is essentially mapped out through an exploration of their interactions. It posits the category of the 'local' as an alternative framework to understand the processes of adaptation, accommodation and contestation within a conflict setting; thereby emerging as an effective counterpoise to static and linear conceptualisations of conflict. This framework acknowledges the dynamism underlying conflict settings and views the relationships and dynamics of power that exist amongst its key actors as subject to potential transformation over time. By adopting this understanding of the local, the research recognises and responds to the gaps in statist process of conflict resolution, and explains the reasons behind the persistence of issues beyond the formal bilateral settlement. These inquiries present critical insights into productions of stability and resolution that are based on the contingencies of local experiences progressing through existent or emergent circumstances of their conflicts. This exists in contrast to existent forms of discernment, which appear to be static in its engagement with the underlying conditions of conflict; and therefore falls short of acknowledging the dynamism of local conflict settings which are subject to frequent transformations. By adopting this standpoint, the study advocates for a continuing process of engagement with the conditions of a particular conflict; as an effective means of constituting a negotiated solution. By opening up statist essentialisms

to alternative perspectives of the local, lends an additional dimension to their conceptualisation. As this study has shown, the inclusion of the local offsets statist essentialisms and lends comprehensiveness, by filling the existent gaps in understanding the necessity and effectiveness of state intervention in local conflict settings.

Addressing Limits of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The research focuses specifically on the enclave dispute as the subject of inquiry and for testing its theoretical suppositions. The element of the local and its inclusion in the framework of understanding conflicts may respond contrarily to spaces located away from the border when one considers the existent divergences in the operation of state power particularly in liminal spaces. The framework put forth by the research therefore need not be used as a measure for gauging the responsiveness of the state or the effectiveness of its policies, but as a point of departure to shift our focus away from its essentialisms. The lucidity of statist conflict narratives belies their underlying dynamism and mutability. Sensitivity towards the polyvalent nature of conflict becomes essential in critically understanding the impacts of state mediation in conflicts at the local level, and thereby avoiding the trappings of teleological statist narratives.

The study explores critical, local narratives and processes surrounding a key issue of bilateral cooperation between India and Bangladesh. By focusing on local experiences in navigating a space, it brings forth an alternate perspective which frames prevalent, statist conceptualisation against local realities. This evinces an understanding of how such demarcated understandings of state power operate in conjunction with a mutable setting, which necessitates adaptations in perpetuity at both ends. The local emerges as a dynamic

subject, in stark contrast to its inert conceptualisation within the Realist paradigm; proactively reacting to the conditionalities imposed on its reality by state power. By engaging with localised framings of space and power, we can inquire into the nature of existence of state power in conflict settings, its interactions with individuals and communities and divergences of community perceptions regarding the same. This may perhaps aid in re-evaluating our understanding of particular conflicts and their subsequent resolution processes to map the origins of ongoing localised concerns; or at the same time adapt local processes of negotiating conflict settings as a blueprint for formal policy intervention. There is also the scope to inquire further into the implications of teleological readings of conflict on their perceptions within and beyond conflict settings. The impact of statist narratives of conflict on their perceptions could be mapped to understand their correlation, and its implications upon public support for policies of resolution or intervention. Further, shifts in support or resistance towards state intercession in conflict spaces and the mobilisation of state narratives at the local level could be used as an entry point – to understand patterns of local mobilisation in conflict settings, predicting cycles of violence and cooperation; and also in mapping out the position local stakeholders in these settings.

The study also extends scholarship on the erstwhile enclaves or *chhitmohols*, by shifting its focus from the subject of their 70 year-long isolation from the state towards questioning the absolutist implications of this separation. The ethnography of these local sites has studied the adaptations made by their inhabitants to circumvent their circumstantial deprivations, limitations and inequalities. The research has touched upon the distinctions in understanding state citizenship as a legal-political institution, based on

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status, rights and duties and its localised replications in the enclaves. There is a scope for analysing the ways in which shifts in subjectivities like 'citizen' and 'non-citizen' were traversed by these '*stateless citizens*' before their exchange in 2015, to understand the underlying motivations of their 'citizenship practices' (Nyers, 2006; Rygiel, 2011). These distinctions between formal and substantive citizenship would shift the discourse towards considering the performance of certain actions that contribute towards the legitimisation of this identity. This would allow for an inquiry into the contours citizenship and belonging by asking 'what makes the citizen?' rather than 'who is the citizen?' By answering how citizenship and claims of belonging to a space are redefined by 'acts' performed by communities lying beyond the state's reach, the inquiry stands to contribute to the debate on how majority and minority identities intersect to assert themselves in framing identities in South Asia.

The framework of resilience engaged with by the study to understand the adaptive capacity of the local can be used to analyse other conflict sites and the processes of negotiation that emerge from them. This can be used to inquire into local perceptions of conflict to gauge or even model the conditions prompting an escalation or reduction in its intensity. Studying local processes and mapping their recursions can bring forth critical insights into understanding the responses and reactions of conflict actors to changes in their settings. The degree and intensity of local resilience towards the state, non-state and other local actors can serve as effective indices for identifying the different stages of an unfolding conflict, and through that detect potentials and identify occasions for effective mediation. The impacts of local level conflicts on inter-state perceptions emerge as another relevant point of inquiry through the research. Its findings have brought forth

insights on how implications of local conflicts in peripheral and liminal spaces like borders can provide an understanding of how their incidences impact upon the bilateral relations between neighbouring countries. The formation of inter-state perceptions and its impacts upon their cycle of interest convergence can be extended to inquire into its subsequent impacts on a regional or world-systems level. Probability models can be created based on these conditions to predict upcoming convergences and also to help in navigating the vagaries underlined by periods of interest divergence.

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