

Frontier Resilience: A Qualitative Study of Civil-Military Synergy in the Rajouri District of Jammu & Kashmir

Sohrab Sharma

Department of Sociology, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal (a central) University, Uttarakhand, (India), e-mail: sohrab.9645@gmail.com



ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9619-6533>

Received: 23/04/2026; Accepted: 01/06/2026, Published: 30/06/2026

Abstract

In Rajouri District, Jammu and Kashmir, volatility along the Line of Control (LoC) creates a governance gap in the northern peripheral border regions, as traditional civil administrative structures have struggled to provide social services consistently. This study examines how the socio-military synergy operates in these areas to foster social empowerment and community stability through civil-military cooperation. The interpretivist approach allows for sociological analysis of cooperation between the civil and military communities within the context of the governance gap. A phenomenological approach, employing qualitative methodology through in-depth semi-structured interviews (n=48) and non-participant observation, was employed with Pahari and Gujjar-Bakarwal families living in the Doongi Block. The results suggest that the Indian Army functions as a surrogate state institution, filling key gaps in education and healthcare for families living in this area. The transition of residents into the Village Defense Community (VDC) model has enabled a shift from passive vulnerability to tactical agency, empowering residents of the frontier as active participants in regional safety. The effective working relationship between the resident and the VDC creates a psychosocial buffer that allows everyday sociality to continue despite the LoC's proximity. The findings of this study suggest that frontier resilience is a form of co-created social capital and that continued empowerment in marginalized areas is best achieved through full integration into institutions rather than solely through kinetic means. This provides a new model of global policy for borderlands.

Keywords: *civil-military synergy, frontier resilience, borderland sociology, conflict.*

1. Introduction

Over the last 30 years, how the border has been conceptualized has shifted dramatically within the social sciences. The Westphalian understanding of borders was traditionally static; as a cartographic line, borders represented the crust of the nation-state, containing its sovereignty and identifying the boundaries of legal or political authority. In contrast, today's scholarship often considers borders to be socially constructed and embedded; they are widespread socio-institutional phenomena affecting the everyday lives and awareness of people living nearby (Paasi, 1996). In South Asia, the border between India and Pakistan in the region of Jammu and Kashmir, known as the Line of Control (LoC), is more than just a boundary; it is a significant organizing principle of social life for the people in that region. The Doongi Block of Rajouri District is a frontier landscape where the border has been incorporated into the vernacular language and literacy practices, the social routines of everyday life and understanding about the psychologies of the people living in the area (Cooper, Perkins, & Rumford, 2014). In the case of Doongi, the boundary is real and experienced through the senses and material things - with sounds of sporadic firing and artillery; the existence of military bunkers built in civilians' homes; and the forever-present Indian Army. This everyday lived experience and understanding of the personal and collective consequences of living in a militarised frontier zone give rise to a borderland consciousness, in which individuals negotiate their identity based on their cultural connections to local people and the reality of military security.

1.1 The Governance Gap and the Military as a Social Actor

One of the most significant obstacles to a government's effective governance in a conflict-prone border region is the governance gap between the two states. This gap often arises due to limitations of the civilian state apparatus, both physical (infrastructure constraints) and administrative (human resources constraints). When located in a physically challenging environment (high altitude and rugged terrain), such as Doongi, the civilian state has more difficulties providing consistent civil services to the population, including education, health services, and infrastructure, during volatile periods of cross-border instability. In the absence of a functioning civil administration, the Indian Army has taken on additional roles and responsibilities beyond its traditional mandate of defending the Territory of India and operating as a surrogate state institution. (Piliavsky, 2013). The Indian Army's involvement in this role is primarily administered through an operation called "Operation Sadbhavana" (Operation Goodwill), which is a flagship military program created to achieve the Indian Army's objective of "Winning Hearts and Minds" (WHAM) of the local population in the area of operations. From a



social perspective, the Indian Army is engaging in a biopolitical act (Coleman & Stuesse, 2014), whereby the Indian State, through its military institution, is managing the health, welfare, and education of the population, to facilitate the continued social reproduction of the comm (Coleman & Stuesse, 2014) unity and thus, to maintain the stability of the territory. This study examines and describes the socio-military synergy created during the biopolitical interaction between the Indian Army's institution and the local population, resulting in Frontier Resilience by strengthening the agency of the local population and enhancing the institutional capacity to deliver support to it.

1.2 Conceptualizing Frontier Resilience in Doongi

Resiliency in Doongi Block is not seen as a static or inherent property but rather as a socially coproduced entity resulting from complex interactions between "Olive Green" (Army) and the people of the "Frontier." Resiliency is tested daily by the conditions of precariousness that characterize life along the border. (Sharma & Sharma, 2025) In their qualitative study, they describe social life in Himalayan villages along the border as a process of constant negotiation over daily activities (e.g., scheduling weddings, agricultural production, and school attendance in relation to conflict patterns).

In Doongi Block, the community's resilience has evolved more formally through the creation of Village Defense Guards (VDGs). VDGs were previously known as Village Defense Committees (VDCs) and represent a shift towards "intersectional bordering" (Cassidy, Yuval-Davis, & Wemyss, 2018), in which the local community is strategically engaged to protect itself. This relationship produces a hybridized identity for residents of Doongi, in that they are both citizen-soldiers who are beneficiaries of state protection and participants in exercising sovereignty on behalf of the nation.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study will critically examine and theoretically understand how civilians and military personnel interact in the Doongi Block. The aims of the research are:

To examine whether there has been a change in the socio-educational and infrastructural development of disadvantaged groups living in Doongi as a result of Operation Sadbhavana.

To explore the sociological relationship between the Village Defense Guard framework, the local authority, and emotional safety.

To understand the effects of the institutional synergy of the two institutions on developing territorial consciousness and lasting resilience of border families.



2. Literature Review

2.1 The Ontological Shift: From Cartography to Social Practice

Modern border research departs from the prior discursive representation of the border as a static geographical fact. Anssi Paasi introduced an entirely new paradigm for borders in the mid-1990s and argued that borders are created through both social practices within institutions and social discourse. Using the Finnish-Russian border as a foundation for his argument, Paasi emphasized that the "territorial consciousness" associated with a border is not simply an automatic byproduct of living in a state but is also developed and maintained through the social reproduction of the boundary. As such, in the Doongi Block, the border is not only part of this sense of national identity, but it is also constantly negotiated through the physical landscape of the Line of Control (LoC) on a day-to-day basis. (Newman & Paasi, 1998) Further developed Paasi's arguments by introducing the concept of "Boundary Narratives." For the communities living in the "postmodern world" of conflict, the border becomes the central character in their life story. In Doongi, the narrative is characterized by "Fences and Neighbors," in which the physical fence delineates who is a "brother" and who is an "enemy." This body of literature indicates that to understand the Doongi community, one must look beyond the maps and into the boundaries established by the local communities living along the zero line.

2.2 The Vernacularisation of the Frontier

Traditional geopolitics is the examination of political interactions and relationships through the perspective of formal interactions, fraught with traditional parameters such as treaties and military forces (i.e., using high politics). At the same time, the vernacular border has been introduced to offer an alternative way to examine how residents experience and respond to borders through their everyday activities (Cooper, Ooms, & Schulman, *Bordering practices and the social reproduction of health and education*, 2014) The assumption made from using the vernacular border as a lens and seeing the border is that it serves as an instrument for people living on and near the border to define what it means to exist as a citizen of the state. This is demonstrated through the sights and sounds experienced by inhabitants (i.e., the sound of intermittent shelling or the tactical movements of military forces) and used by them to negotiate the legitimacy of their statehood (Cooper, Ooms, & Schulman, *Bordering practices and the social reproduction of health and education*, 2014)



The process of vernacularisation is also intimately connected to the concept of everyday sociality. (Sharma & Sharma, 2025) Qualitative research in the Himalayan border villages is viewed as underpinning this type of research; they argue that resiliency in these areas is not an abstract dynamic, but rather a negotiated process of social practice. Social activities for families living in Rajouri (e.g., marriages, religious festivals, agricultural harvests) do not cease because of violent conflict; however, they are reorganized around it. The aforementioned literature has clearly demonstrated that, while we know how social activities reorganize to adapt, there remains a knowledge gap regarding how the military institution has been the primary enabler of these adaptations in border areas such as Doongi.

2.3 The Surrogate State and Biopolitical Governance

Military forces have played an important role in the governance of borderlands by extending their capabilities beyond military defense. (Piliavsky, 2013) outlines a framework for understanding how the military has acted as a surrogate state, providing governance in areas where a civil state is absent or unable to provide its level of governance due to the effects of war and geography. An example of how the military acted as a surrogate state can be found in the Indian Army's implementation of Operation Sadbhavana.

The phenomenon of a military acting as a surrogate state in the borderlands could be interpreted within the context of the theory of Biopolitics developed by Coleman and Stuesse (2014). Biopolitics is the state's action to manage the biological and social lives of its citizens, aiming to ensure the population remains stable. Examples of the military's biopolitical management of the borderlands include providing veterinary care for the livestock of Gujjar-Bakarwal communities and providing schools for the children of Doongi. (Walters, 2006) notes that border security is not merely defined by walls, but also by the management of the mobility of people within this space. The military provides for the health and education of its citizens in borderlands, thereby strengthening the human depth of the border.

2.4 Historical Trauma and Geographies at the Margins

Doongi's current social setting is intertwined with the trauma experienced due to the work of the Radcliffe Boundary Commission. According to Chester (2009), the Partition lines were drawn arbitrarily, without regard for the human geography of the Punjab and Jammu region, creating what Cons & Sanyal (2013) have termed the "Geographies at the Margins". The Geographies at the Margins are areas that are



peripheral, in which residents of one side of the border share a collective sense of identity with residents on the opposite side, despite the existence of political tensions.

Within the Doongi social setting, the role the army plays in development is influenced in part by the long history of marginalization that residents of Doongi have experienced. To connect Frontier Citizen to the larger national social structure, the military is attempting to reconcile territorial contradictions that. (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999) identified and suggested that borders produce contradictory meanings. For example, while the state has an interest in maintaining closure at the border, people living on either side of the border want to keep it open. Through military-civilian collaboration in Doongi, the military serves as a mediator between these two contradictory meanings of the border and provides residents with a sense of connection to the state by providing access to essential services.

2.5 Intersectional Bordering and Community Agency

Recently, literature shifted from seeing border residents as victims to viewing them as active agents. (Cassidy, Yuval-Davis, & Wemyss, Intersectional border(ing)s, 2018) elaborate on the concept of Intersectional Bordering as being the outcome of coproducing security by actors. The Village Defense Guard (VDG) system in the Rajouri sector accomplishes this best by providing local civilians with both arms and training to co-opt state authority to be the sole arbiter of violence in the community.

This type of empowerment transforms the border into a 'Multiperspectival. (Rumford, 2012) whereby the resident is both a farmer and a border worker. It is through this dual identity that Frontier Resilience happens. (Jordans, Pigott, & Tol, 2016) found that the best way to develop psychological resilience for people in conflict is 'community-based support systems.' The VDG system provides the civilian population with a sense of agency and control over their circumstances, which is necessary for the psychological survival of borderland communities (Newman & Paasi, Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: Boundary narratives in political geography, 1998)

2.6 Education as a Pillar of Resilience

The educational aspect of conflict and crisis is the central theme across the literature, derived from frameworks set forth by (Wait, 2023) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2023). Both assert that schools in crises are more than just "places of learning," schools serve as a safe place to help students socially and emotionally through these challenges. Research from Diab and Punamäki & Diab (2020) has demonstrated that academic underachievement, as a result of stress and distress,



directly affects the ability of a community to recover and build positive futures after experiencing a war or other events that lead to trauma and stress.

Using an ecological psychosocial support framework (Betancourt, McBain, Newnham, & Brennan, 2014), it becomes clear that the military's involvement in education serves as a protective layer, shielding Doongi children from the effects of border instability. This study seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by exploring how this specific form of community institutional intervention (military-run schools) provides long-term resilience capital for the Doongi Block, allowing the community to continue to survive at the Line of Control (LoC).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design: A Qualitative Interpretivist Approach

The proposed research utilizes an interpretivist view of social reality (interpretivism) and consists of qualitative descriptive research methods. Furthermore, the primary aim of this research is to go beyond surface-level measures of military assistance by documenting residents' subjective (interpretive) processes of meaning-making regarding border-related insecurity in Doongi. (Paasi, 1996) has argued that borderland realities are socially constructed; therefore, an interpretive approach is necessary to understand the constructs of "resilience" and "synergy" as experienced by the residents of Doongi. This research will employ "thick description" so that the findings will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex social fabric of a frontier zone, rather than merely being presented as abstract geo-political assessments.

3.2 Study Area: The Micro-Context of Doongi Block

The research focused exclusively on the Doongi block of Rajouri District, Jammu and Kashmir, India. It was considered an extremely good location for border research due to its close proximity to the LoC. The topography of the Doongi block is described as broken; i.e., steep ridges and deep ravines make access to areas with civil administrative presence difficult. The villages selected within the Doongi block are affected directly by the vernacular border. (Cooper, Perkins, & Rumford, The vernacularization of borders, 2014) i.e., military infrastructure is integrated into the residential area around the border. The significance of this site was based on being a high-density area for both operations associated with Sadbhavana and VDG, and thus offered a large amount of data on institutional synergy.



3.3 Sampling Strategy and Participant Profile (n=48)

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 48 participants, who served as the basis for collecting information to support the authenticity and representativeness of the research data on civil-military synergy. The sample was divided into three groups to provide a basis for data triangulation:

Direct Beneficiaries (n=20); i.e., parents of students at Army-run Schools (AGPS Rajouri, Tender Feet School Keri & Valley View Army Public School), local farmers using military veterinary services, and residents receiving emergency medical care from the military.

Village Defense Guards (n=18); VDG members were interviewed to identify the impact of Tactical Agency and the psychological implications of service as a Citizen-Soldier.

Community Anchors (n=10) community leaders, including Sarpanches (head Village officials), teachers, and elders, who will provide a longitudinal view of the changing role of military service in Doongi over time.

Although the data from the sample groups represent the individual lived experience, there is an expectation that many of the participants in Groups I and II may actively support pro-military beliefs regardless of their actual military involvement. Thus, this potential support was taken into consideration when the data were analysed, because participants assessed for this study belong to a common sociopolitical subculture as a frontier community.

3.4 Data Collection: Navigating the Frontier

The data collection associated with this research was conducted through utilising immersive fieldwork techniques, with two primary tools of data collection used;

Semi-Structured Interviews: These interviews were conducted principally in the local Pahari and Gojri dialects to promote a sense of comfort to the respondent and were conducted in a conversational narrative style which included questions to provide the respondents with the opportunity to explain their daily life's (i.e., what the respondents did each day) and to describe their perception of 'Olive Green' as well as explain how they interpret security.

Non-Participant Observation: During the course of the study, a substantial amount of time was spent in public spaces of Doongi (e.g., village squares, school gates, and medical stores), where the researcher observed Everyday Sociality (Sharma & Sharma, 2025) occurring in these locations. In addition, nonverbal interactions and

unspoken trust were recorded and contributed to the overall understanding of the civilian-military relationship.

4. Results

The fieldwork conducted in the Doongi Block has uncovered a complex ecological system that encompasses civil-military cooperation. The evidence suggests a Frontier Resilience, based on various institutional interventions designed to provide material assistance and psychological security. Research findings are grouped into themes, with supporting examples, case studies, and narrative accounts for each.

4.1 The Surrogate State and Educational Stability

A major conclusion is that military-supported schools help provide some Continuity and stability for the youth of border regions. In a region where civilians' lives can be affected by the LoC on a regular basis, educational Continuity is the most important indicator of long-term resilience.

School Hostel System & Operation Sadbhavana

The AGPS Rajouri is the ultimate example of educational cohesion for the Rajouri sector. One of the major findings from this study is the impact of the hostel facilities provided under Operation Sadbhavana. Some children from the most isolated villages of Doongi have to cross treacherous terrain and endure harsh conditions to attend school. These hostel facilities create an atmosphere of total safety for these children. However, it is limited.

Interview (10th Class Boy):

"Back in my village, I was always under constant pressure. At the hostel, I do not worry about how I will get to school, and I have light to study at night. The staff takes care of us and makes sure we have everything we need. I no longer feel like a 'border child' but instead am just a student."

This narrative reveals that the hostel is not just a residence; it is a Psychosocial Sanctuary that decouples the child's academic potential from the volatility of the border.

Case Study: Tender Feet School, Keri – The Middle Path Model

The Tender Feet School (also referred to as Tender Feet), located within the Keri Village area, is a prime example of a Self-Sustaining Synergy model. At the same time, AGPS provides free education to some of the most disadvantaged children. Unlike fully-



funded projects, Tender Feet charges a small fee for the cost of education and has been provided significant logistical assistance from the military.

Logistical Support: The military provides transportation by providing bus service from the village boundary to the school location for safe and secure travel on sensitive routes.

Quality, Consistency, and Standards: The Tender Feet curriculum and code of conduct are based upon military standards; thus, there is considerable agreement from many parents about the quality of the education being provided by Tender Feet school is far superior to that of other schools within the Block.

Quote from the father of a girl at Keri:

"We pay a very small fee to attend Tender Feet school; however, the educational quality is superior. The children from the town are taken by school bus. We expect to achieve the same educational outcome as children living in cities"

4.2 Tactical Agency and the Village Defense Guard (VDG)

The findings from the Doongi case indicate that the transition to the VDG model represents a fundamental change in the balance of power; whereas previously non-combatants were viewed as protected individuals, they are now considered strategic allies.

VDG Experience: According to members of the VDG (n=18) interviewed as part of this project, the shift from Passive Fear to Active Vigilance has completely altered their view of the threat they face.

As one interviewee (Participant #34) stated, "We used to wait for the wolves to prey on us like sheep; now we are like dogs who bark and bite anyone who comes into our territory." Interviewees also claim that they have learned to read the mountains through the training they receive from the Army and JKP (Jammu and Kashmir Police), as well as how to properly use the weapons they are provided with. They describe themselves as being the first line of defense."

4.4 Socio-Economic Continuity and Livelihood Protection

Livestock management by military assistance is a major part of the economic resilience of Doongi agro-pastoralist communities (Gujjars and Bakarwals).

Interview Insight from village Chitti-Bakri (Participant #11, Shepherd):

"My goats are my savings. If one dies, I have lost my value. The civil veterinary doctor is 20 km from me (I cannot get to) and often does not have a supply of medicines. The army vet comes to our 'Dhoke' (high pasture). They give us supplies of

medication, as well as train us on how to identify signs of infection early. This help has kept me from selling my herd and going to the city to work as a labourer."

4.5 Synthesis: The Hybrid Resilience Framework of Doongi

Collectively, the data obtained from the 48 participants indicates that the Doongi Block has created a hybrid resilience model that is not restricted to one program alone but utilizes a model based on a Security-welfare nexus where the military provides the following:

- Institutional Continuity (i.e., AGPS/Tender Feet schools)
- Emergency Infrastructure (i.e., medical MI rooms/engineering support)
- Participatory Security (i.e., VDG framework)

5. Discussion

The results provide compelling evidence for re-evaluating the existing paradigms of borderland governance. They reveal that within an area of high conflict, Community resilience is not a spontaneous psychological characteristic but rather a structured, coproduced result of civil-military synergy. This section will now use these findings and apply them to three theoretical lenses (i.e., critical border studies) to examine how the institution of the state is being replaced by new forms of governance through institutional substitution, the vernacularisation of security, and the social reproduction of the state.

5.1 The Surrogate State and the Biopolitics of Welfare

According to (Piliavsky, 2013), the military-driven projects are indicative of the social reproduction of the state. In times when the civil government is unable to provide services to citizens due to the governance gap created by conflict, the military institution continues to operate outside its kinetic framework and assumes additional development responsibilities.

In this context, one theory that applies to this phenomenon is that of Biopolitical Governance. (Coleman & Stuesse, Visualizing border economy: Displacement, separation and the making of boundary consciousness, 2014) By establishing health care centers and educational facilities, the state manages the life of the frontier to maintain a stable, loyal populace, which is necessary for territorial defense.

5.2 Vernacular Borders and the Citizen-Soldier Identity

The introduction of the Village Defense Guard (VDG) framework at the local level marks a significant change in how locals view their geographic area (i.e., from a



largely passive victim mentality to a tactical agent mentality). According to (Paasi, Territories, Boundaries, and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border, 1996), borders are not just physical boundaries but are also constructed socially by the practice of border-making. The VDG provides a local democratic method of "vernacularising" security for the state (Cooper, Perkins, & Rumford, The vernacularization of borders, 2014). More importantly, the interview data suggest that VDG members now see themselves as citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as anyone else in India, thus agreeing with (Rumford, Towards a multiperspectival study of borders, 2012); i.e., seeing themselves, rather than just being victims of geo-political forces. The Citizen Soldier believes that, while both soldiers and police are separate from the militarised state, they are also working towards a common goal: homeland defense (i.e., control over their own territory). Thus, the Citizen Soldier's relationship with other members of the armed forces helps moderate some of the continued trauma caused by the partitioning created by the Radcliffe (Chester, 2009), therefore, giving an added amount of significance to the role that the previously marginalized peripheral citizens will play in the overall national security apparatus.

5.3 Frontier Sociality and the Psychosocial Buffer

The present study focuses on establishing institutional synergy functioning as a 'psychosocial buffer' in one community through participants' access to everyday sociality enabled by the military's provision of sensory security. The presence of the army in geographic proximity to Doongi creates a context that supports a psychologically stable environment.

This finding contrasts with the assumption that military presence in border areas creates securitization fatigue; rather, this study shows that, for Doongi residents, the army represents institutional Continuity. According to the (Betancourt, McBain, Newnham, & Brennan, 2014) review, a stable guardian institution is identified as the strongest predictor of resilience among children affected by crisis. The Army plays an important role in Doongi. It ensures that the established method of transferring social practices like marriage, livestock movements and education continue in spite of the risk of disruption due to Borders of Control (LoC). For example, use of the Army's infrastructure supports the delivery model of fee for service education, thereby allowing for a strong educational experience within publicly supported educational resources.

5.4 The Ethics of Dependency and Long-term Sustainability



The positive evidence of synergy at Doongi raises important questions from a sociological perspective concerning Institutional Dependence in the Dominican Republic. The fact that the Dominican Republic is heavily dependent upon the military to carry out Surrogate State functions (e.g., the veterinary care of livestock belonging to Gujjars and the transportation of school children) suggests that civil institutions in this area of the country are essentially nonexistent.

Using the Geographic Framework of the Frontier Resilience Theory "Geographies at the Margins" as described by Cons & Sanyal (2013), we contend that in order to be truly sustainable, the military must provide scaffolding that ultimately supports the development of civil institutions within the context of "Frontier Resilience." It suggests that as the military establishes "Participatory Resilience," the community will not simply be a consumer of military welfare services, but will also have a role as a co-producer of its own future development. Consequently, it holds promise for reducing the potential for "paternalistic dependency" and for providing opportunities to improve the civil-military-citizen relationship among the various stakeholders.

5.5 Theoretical Synthesis: The Doongi Model

The Doongi Block exemplifies "Multiperspectival Bordering (Rumford, Towards a multiperspectival study of borders, 2012), and the relationship between the military and society has produced a unique social order based on the foundations of both security and development as inseparable. The combination of Islands of Stability and the empowerment of the Citizen-Soldier through the VDG framework has transformed the area from a potential vulnerability to a zone of sustainable resiliency.

For both researchers and policymakers, the Doongi model indicates that the future of border management will not be found in the construction of walls or in exclusion, but rather in the deep institutionalized integration of the military with the frontier community. As a result, the LoC will shift from a "line of conflict" to an area of social reproduction.

6. Conclusion

The sociological study of the Doongi Block in Rajouri points to a complex and dynamic resilience continuum that disrupts the traditional separation between the military and civilian populace to enable frontier synergy. The resilience found among these border communities, when examined from this perspective, is not an inherent or fixed psychological characteristic; rather, it is a product of the social co-construction that takes place, as a result of cooperative efforts between the Indian Army under Operation Sadbhavana and border residents, to create an institutional scaffolding for these



northernmost populations of India, who, due to geographic disadvantages (e.g, lack of adequate public infrastructure) relative to their counterparts in the Indian heartland, rely on the Indian Army as their surrogate state. Because they will have endured years of conflict with little hope of alternative means of support or economic survival, the establishment of islands of stability allows residents of these border communities to stabilize their lives within the framework of the Indian Army, independent of the chronic trauma created by conflict on the Line of Control between India and Pakistan. The primary mechanism for creating these zones of stability is the establishment of educational institutions, which serve as psychosocial sanctuaries that support young people's cognitive and academic development (Paasi, 1996), thereby mitigating the negative effects of regional instability on their lives.

This study has expanded the idea of "Critical Border Studies" regarding how security is "vernacularised" (i.e., turned into a language of everyday experience) such that instead of being passive subjects of state protection, individuals living near the border actively engage as "citizen-soldiers" through the framework of the Village Defense Guard (VDG) in various parts of northern India. For that resilience, however, to remain sustainable and not fall victim to the "institutional dependency" trap, a shift to a "participatory governance" model is recommended, whereby civil departments integrate with military logistical "shells" to create a "holistic" rather than purely "securitized" relationship with bordering communities. The experience of Doongi also demonstrates that the strongest defense of a nation's border poise will not be found in the height of its walls but rather, in the depth of its institutional integration with the frontier community through a transformation of the line of friction that comes to exist between state and societal elements, into an opportunity for the facilitation of social reproduction and sustainable development. A standard for managing borders has arisen from the synergism of the collaboration between the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and Border Patrol agencies with regard to Sierra County Residents, described as 'Olive Green' (military) and 'Frontier Communities' (defending community residents). With the creation of social capital from partnerships between these two groups, they provide a very significant deterrent against external turmoil and internal marginalization.

7. References

- Anderson, J., & O'Dowd, L. (1999). *Borders, border regions and territoriality: Contradictory meanings, changing significance. Regional Studies*, 693–704.
- Betancourt, T. S., McBain, R., Newnham, E. A., & Brennan, R. T. (2014). *Trajectories of apprehension and resilience: A longitudinal study of war-affected youth. Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 1188–1197.



- Cassidy, K., Yuval-Davis, N., & Wemyss, G. (2018). *Intersectional border(ing)s*. In R. J. Johnson, *Placing the Border in Everyday Life* (pp. 139–141). London: Routledge.
- Chester, L. P. (2009). *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of Punjab*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Coleman, M., & Stuesse, A. (2014). *Visualizing border economy: Displacement, separation and the making of boundary consciousness*. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 430–448.
- Cons, J., & Sanyal, R. (2013). *Geographies at the margins: Borders in South Asia – an introduction*. *Political Geography*, 5-13.
- Cooper, A., Ooms, G., & Schulman, S. (2014). *Bordering practices and the social reproduction of health and education*. *Global Social Policy*, 312–330.
- Cooper, A., Perkins, C., & Rumford, C. (2014). *The vernacularization of borders*. In R. J. Johnson, *Placing the Border in Everyday Life* (pp. 15–32). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Jordans, M. J., Pigott, H., & Tol, W. A. (2016). *Interventions for children’s mental health and psychosocial support in low- and middle-income countries*. *World Psychiatry*, 125–134.
- Newman, D., & Paasi, A. (1998). *Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: Boundary narratives in political geography*. *Progress in Human Geography*, 186–207.
- Paasi, A. (1996). *Territories, Boundaries, and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Piliavsky, A. (2013). *Borders without borderlands: On the social reproduction of state demarcation in Rajasthan*. In D. N. Gellner, *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia* (pp. 24–46). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Punamäki, R.-L., & Diab, S. Y. (2020). *Factors contributing to student academic underachievement in war and conflict: A multilevel qualitative study*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 103-164.
- Rumford, C. (2012). *Towards a multiperspectival study of borders*. *Geopolitics*, 887–902.
- Sharma, S., & Sharma, M. S. (2025). *Families at the frontier: A qualitative study of border conflict and everyday social life in border villages*. *Himalayan Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 116–127.
- UNICEF. (2023). *The State of the World’s Children 2023: For Every Child, Vaccination*. UNICEF.
- Wait, R. R. (2023). *Education Cannot Wait*. New York: ECW / United Nations.
- Walters, W. (2006). *Border/Control*. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 187–203.

Citation; Sohrab, S, *Frontier Resilience: A Qualitative Study of Civil-Military Synergy in the Rajouri District of Jammu & Kashmir*. *Social Empowerment Journal*. 2026; 8(2): pp. 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.34118/sej.v8i2.4661>

Publisher’s Note: SEJ stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations

