

## Making Border Studies Together: From Japan to the World

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### Introduction

Border Studies developed in Asia after its birth in the U.S. and Europe. There are many “border” researchers working in and on Asia but they have yet to discover that Asian Border Studies has reshaped the world. Ulises Granados was undoubtedly a potential researcher to contribute to the research development of this field. Ulises studied the South China Sea border disputes in history. After earning his Ph.D. at the University of Tokyo under the tutelage of Professor Takeshi Hamashita, a famous scholar of Asian Studies and maritime networks, he moved back to his home country, Mexico[1]. There, he became one of the foremost commentators on contemporary China issues in Mexico, as well as working on the South China Sea disputes that currently feature in policy making circles and the media[2].

The Border Studies community embraced him in the context of not only Asian Studies in Latin America but also borders in the Global South. Factually, Mexico is located in a critical geo-political position between the U.S. and Guatemala, to its south. Mexico’s southern borders are a gateway for migrant-refugees from autocratic Honduras and El Salvador. However, entrance into southern Mexico is comparatively simple, while mobility within Mexico has been difficult for the migrants because of social instability and the risks of kidnapping in Mexico itself. In 2018, thousands of migrants pushed from Guatemala to the U.S. through Mexico, though President Donald Trump refused admit them onto U.S. soil and they were blocked at the border of San Diego. In December 2017, Ulises Granados and I did field research in the Mexican south, contributing to the world-wide border studies community by investigating the “notorious” borderlands in Central America[3]. We also had plans to visit the Mexican-Belize borderlands soon, but he passed away before that trip became a reality.

Ulises’s early departure is a great loss to the border studies community both in the Asian and Global South contexts. This paper on my general view on (national) borders is devoted to imagining the work he would have done, and to encourage someone to proceed in place of him.

### What are Borders?

What do readers think of when they hear the word “national border”? Do they visualize a physical line drawn between one nation and another? A fence drawn over grasslands and hills? A threshold over which one cannot cross? Primarily they must visualize a single visible line. However, in reality border lines are not always visible. Consider for instance, the borders of my country, Japan. It is well-known that many Japanese people lack a sense of national borders; however, this is because no imaginary lines separate us from other nations. Only the endlessly expanding ocean surrounds us. Thus, the space surrounding Japan seems to extend to infinity.

However, the invisible border is not limited solely to the ocean. There are mountains as well. A mountain ridge naturally serves as a national border; however, even those living nearby cannot see it. It would be difficult to build a fence across a mountain several thousand meters tall. People far from the border tend to think of lines on maps, or fences as borders preventing entry to foreigners.

Further, let us consider rivers and lakes. If the other bank cannot be seen, people are

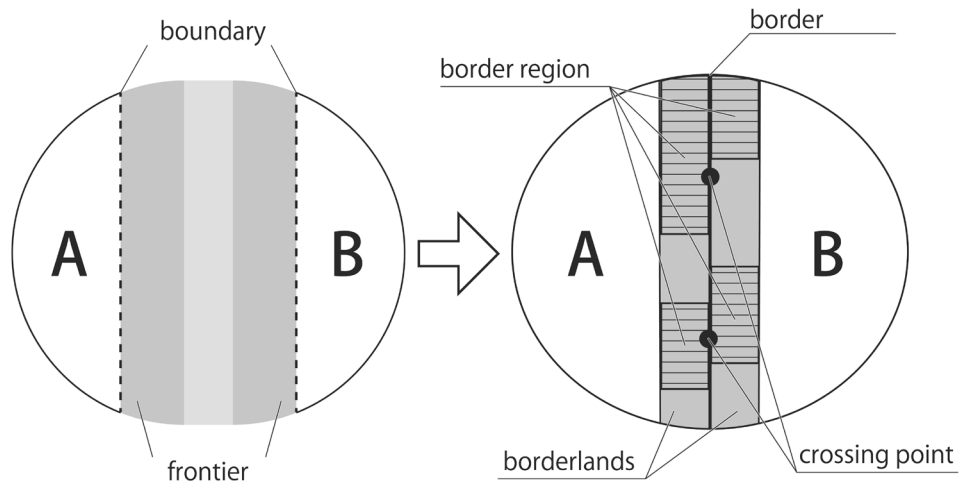
unlikely to be aware of any line. Standing on one's side of the bank, the river/lake stretching across would seem like the ocean. However, if there were people living on the other side of the river/lake, it would make one conscious of the boundary between us and them. This is all the more evident if one could see it. With lakes and rivers, even oceans, a boundary comes into existence once we become aware of the other side. However, whether this can be called a national border is another matter, one that we discuss later.

Additionally, what about the sky? Human life was, for a long time, conducted between two dimensions on the surface of the Earth; therefore, previous generations never considered dividing the sky. However, the development of airships and airplanes forced us to consider boundaries in the sky. Naturally, this eventually leads to considering boundaries in outer space. The meaning of oceans has also changed along with developments in science and technology. Originally, there was no idea of creating a boundary at the bottom of oceans and fencing it in. That only happened after it became possible to exploit the depths of oceans. Simultaneously, this has led to efforts to cordon off even more of the resources within and on the surface of the sea. If technological progress develops people's lives, that space will expand. Subsequently, that space will encounter other spaces. Thus, boundaries are created in the three dimensions of land, sea, and sky.



**Globe at Hokkaido University Museum**

Look at the Earth from space. There are no boundaries to be seen. There are boundaries distinguished by natural features such as mountains, rivers, and oceans. In the past, borders were often established on the basis of these natural features. However, the expansion of human-managed space surpassed these natural boundaries. A small entity develops, and subsequently annexes and conquers neighboring countries and societies as spaces that are “uninhabited.” The space located on the extending edge of the state is called the “frontier.” When the frontier is incorporated by a state, its boundary extends farther and farther outward. The disappearance of the frontier occurs when nations collide in the process of expansion. The bound formed by the collision of two expanding things—this is a boundary. Therefore, when physically expressing borders between countries, “boundary” is the preferred term.



### Disappearance of the Frontier and Birth of a Border

However, in this paper, I would like to use the word “border.” This is because it can express both the physical and conceptual meaning. In general, borders conjure up images of a single space divided by many lines. In other words, this is predicated on the quintessential human capacity to draw lines anywhere in space, and in any way. First, let us consider physical borders. After a given state is created, subsequently expanding, it often finally disintegrates. What arises from this is not so much a boundary as a newly drawn border. Conversely, when one space is integrated with another space, that border may disappear. Of course, this border moves or changes and may occur due to political dynamics; however, border changes can also be performed to manipulate populations. For example, the division of colonies by empires, which often became borders after those colonies achieved independence, was nothing more than the creation of borders by the colonial rulers in defiance of local conditions, thus creating unrest in these regions.

This is a good example of how human perception creates new borders. International law is an invention of the human mind, and as such, changes with the times. For instance, consider the case of the ocean. The border of a country used to be considered up to three or even twelve nautical miles out into the sea, with only the high seas beyond that. However, what is the current situation? Various lines of power have been drawn with the introduction of the Convention on the Continental Shelf and exclusive economic zones (EEZs). These cannot be called borders in the traditional sense; however, they are clearly lines that could be called quasi-borders, where the exercise of national power extends to certain matters. The extension of these lines, and the fabrication of this new character of line, are all the products of the human imagination.

In summary, actual, physical borders and representational borders based on human perception have a close relationship with each other. Moreover, instead of actual, physical borders, postmodern scholars who seek to overcome and critique modernity see the world in terms of representational borders and the ideas and discourses that surround them. Indeed, if physical borders and boundaries are not determined solely by power relations, but by interacting

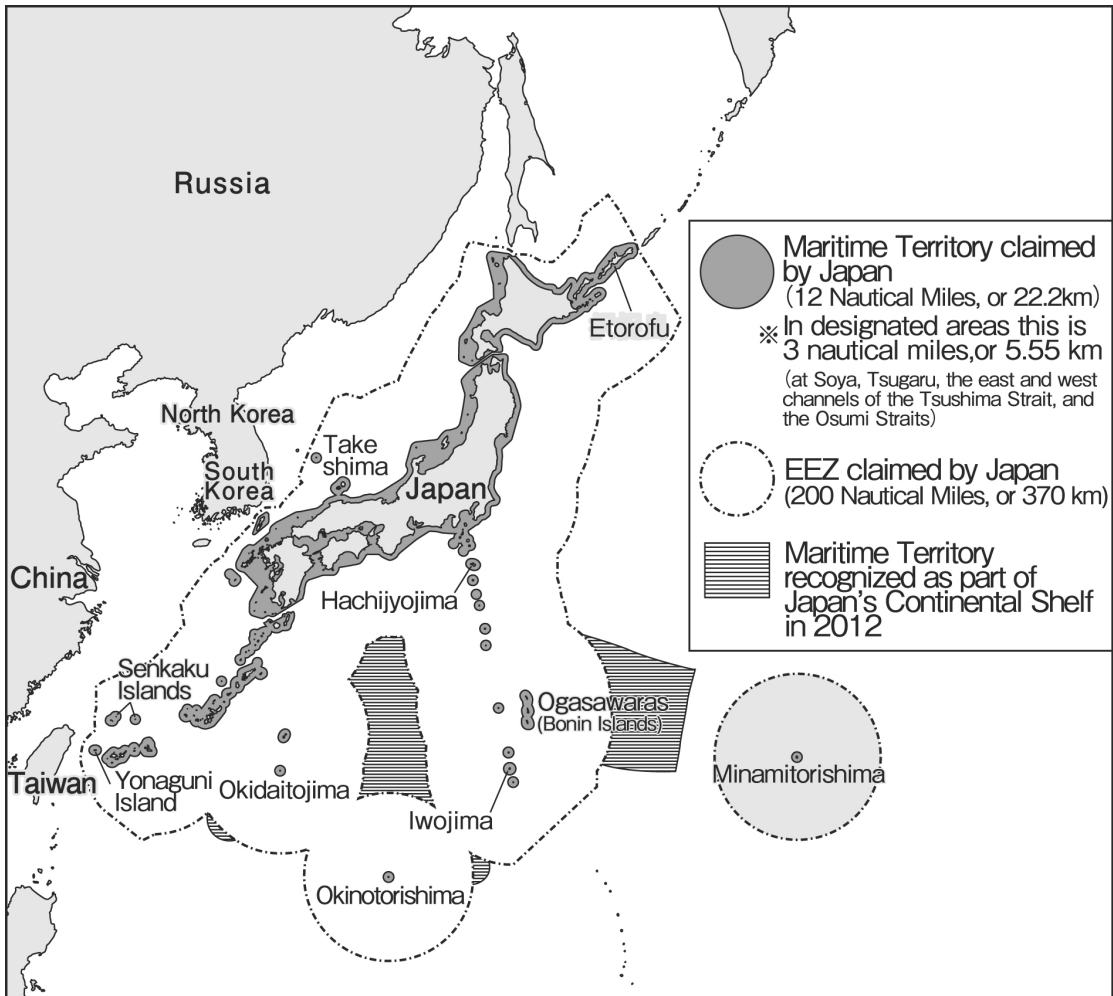
societies, then claims to their legitimacy will naturally strengthen the extent to which they are constructed within societies. Even with physical borders, lines drawn in rivers and seas cannot be seen. This is all the more evident if these lines are borders born from the human mind. Here, borders can be classified as either visible or invisible. Furthermore, if the border encloses a space, the enclosed space has a width, and if it encloses the sky or a space under the ground (or in the depths of the ocean), the space can even be three-dimensional. In other words, borders are not just simple lines, but areas with breadth; in other words, borders can be considered a framework for borderlands.

When borders are drawn freely in space, and when they are lines of power drawn and managed by the state, relations between the states often leads to confrontation and conflict. If the international order prior to the twentieth century allowed for disputes to be resolved through war, then the situation was such that the movement of borders occurred as a result of war, if not due to coercion by powerful countries (monetary transactions also played a role in this regard). This movement of borders was not the simple drawing of a line, but rather the transfer of space. This is termed as a territorial dispute. Setting aside distant colonial territories of empires, it is worth noting here that territorial disputes have often occurred between neighboring countries. I would illustrate a Japan case here: Japan is embroiled in legal disputes over national claims to sovereignty over the Northern Territories (Southern Kuril Islands), Takeshima, and Senkaku Islands; these disputes in turn lead to questions of where and how to draw borders, both physically and figuratively[4].

### **Territoriality in Japan's Borderlands**

When a border is situated as a problem of partitioning space, it becomes a subject for geography. By using this analytical framework, discussed in detail below, it becomes possible to compare and correlate territorial conflicts as disputes over space. Territorial disputes typically tend to occur due to politically motivated behavior such as emphasizing the ahistoricity and uniqueness of one's claims to territory, making them absolute, and in doing so, rejecting dialog with others and dramatically highlighting one's own righteousness. However, a comparison of territoriality can clarify that most disputes are neither as absolute nor unique as assumed by the involved parties.

Another significant issue to consider when thinking about borders in space is the ability of nations to share the abovementioned framework of borderlands. In a sense, it is an oppositional relationship, similar to the center/periphery or capital/regional relationship of a state. However, since the focal point of opposition is the boundary of space, it becomes possible to treat this interstice between national borders as its own territory. In other words, viewing borders not as lines but as expanses makes it possible for practical challenges of politics and economy to be tackled at specific borderlands. For example, the introduction of special zones into lands facing national borders and multi-layered immigration controls divided by space (e.g., implementation of visa exemptions limited to border areas) are commonplace not only in Europe and the U.S. but also in Eurasia and Asia. There has also been considerable discussion of collaboration and cooperation between spaces that straddle national borders, that is, between border regions (for example, the concept of twin cities).



**Japan's Borderlands and its Maritime Zone**  
 (Cited from Iwashita, *Japan's Border Issues*)

In Japan, for example, this manifests in distinct, specific themes, such as how to support and promote remote borderlands such as Tsushima Island, 50 kilometers away from the Korean Peninsula, and Yonaguni Island, 100 kilometers away from Taiwan; how to promote cross-border economic and social cooperation; and how to ensure sustainable regional development in places such as Fukuoka (Kyushu) and Busan (Korea), or Wakkanai (Hokkaido) and Sakhalin (Russia). It is precisely because Japan lacks an awareness of borders and boundaries that it is necessary to actively study a variety of advanced cases in Europe and the U.S., compare them, and consider their applicability to Japan. This is one of the most important social contributions that border studies can contribute a precise understanding of Japan's border landscape for all.

One significant aspect of discussions based on comparisons of space is that they are not so attached to the specific wording of claims to demarcated borders. For example, the city of Nemuro in Hokkaido is referred to as "the origin of the Northern Territory Reclamation

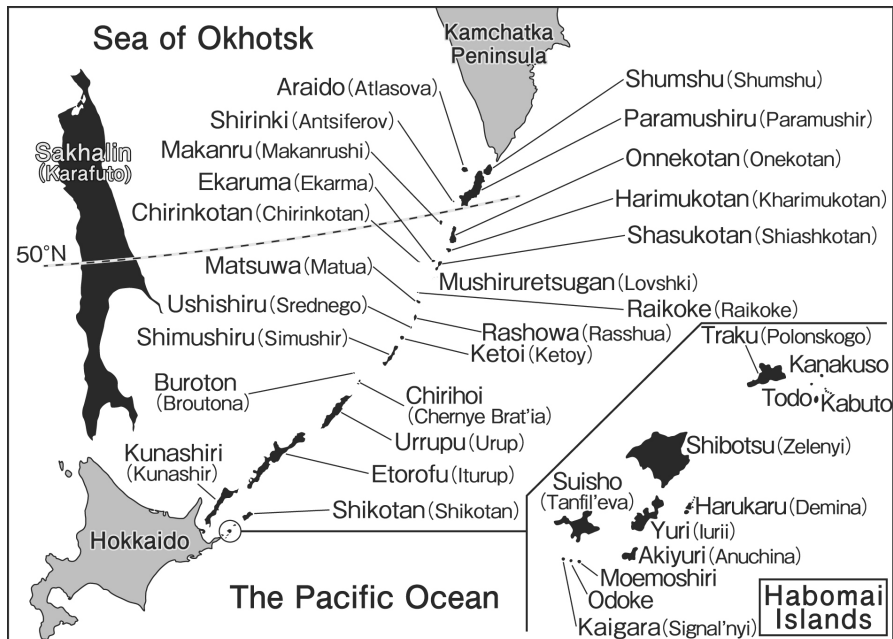
Movement”; however, terming Nemuro as a “national border town” or “borderland” continues to be officially prohibited. The reason given for this by officials is rather eccentric. They state that Nemuro cannot be termed a “national border town” because the official government position is that Japan’s border lies north of Etorofu Island.

However, this view is doubly mistaken. First, from the standpoint of spatial theory, when a state does not have effective control over its territory, the borderline that appears there has the function of a de facto border, even if it cannot be called a “national border.” In short, the space controlled by the national power of Japan is cut off at Nemuro, with the other side controlled by another power. The reluctance to call that line a “national border” is understandable; however, no matter how it is described, Nemuro is still a de facto “border town.” The second mistake is the assumption that borders are lines. The expression “borderlands” means a space that has its own unique character owing to the presence of borders. Even if calling it a “border town” is a forbidden act, it is not wrong to describe Nemuro as a “border region.” In fact, Nemuro is considered the “mother city” of the Northern Territories, the four Northern Island regions of which are recognized as one region. Using the insights of border studies allows one to quickly spot false claims such as these.

A side note about Nemuro: the Nemuro example provides a good chance to learn about maritime borders, that is, national borders formed by the sea. Kaigara Island is located 3.7 kilometers from Cape Nosappu in Nemuro. While in theory it is within a swimming distance (though practically impossible due to rough seas), and while the line itself cannot be seen, it is one of the few spots in Japan where the border can be visualized. Of course, there are no fences, nor any physical barriers separating these spaces. In reality, however, anyone attempting to cross that line will be arrested by Russian soldiers and possibly even shot. Locals describe it as an “invisible wall.” When the “invisible wall” is “visualized” with words, a new spatial comparison becomes possible. Unlike the other islands of the Northern Territories, the Habomai Islands have historically and administratively always been a part of Nemuro City. Hence, the existence of a “wall” between Habomai and Nemuro means that the originally unified space was divided, placing it in the category of divided cities. The reality here is similar to the “Berlin Wall.” From this viewpoint, one can see the lives of people who are blocked by “walls.” Thus, the sphere of people’s lives is torn apart by the formation and movement of borders. How different this scene must look from the old territorial disputes over sovereignty.



**Habomai Islands as a Part of Nemuro City with Nosappu Cape**



**Japan's Borderlands and its Maritime Zone**  
(Cited from Iwashita, *Japan's Border Issues*)

The story does not end here. Regardless of the question of disputed areas, it may be possible to discuss correlations between Nemuro and Wakkanai, Tsushima, and Yonaguni (which have no disputed land) if we compare these spaces as border areas. If the existence of some kind of “wall” is a common characteristic of border regions, discussing this from the perspective of the local residents gives rise to the following research subject: “people living on the border.” Based on its interdisciplinary richness, the field of border studies can then, so to speak, return its results to these people via practice.

Thus far, I have attempted to sketch the landscape of the subject through discussions of boundaries and borders via examples I consider most relevant. However, studies of borders have been accumulating organically well before I encountered them and discovered the overlap with our work, and even before I discovered the category of border studies. These traces of studies of borders in other fields are diverse and cannot be neatly summarized, nor have they yet been properly organized and shared with the research community. Nevertheless, I wish to present my own categorization of this academic field to enable readers to understand its background and scope.

### **Development of a “Study of Borders”**

How are national borders decided and drawn in the first place? Research on physical boundaries has its origins in Europe. The Westphalian system, in which lines were drawn through space by the concept of sovereignty, and power ruled exclusively within those spaces, was created in Western Europe. The people who live in the space enclosed by the boundary are represented as “citizens”; the rules applied within this space are standardized; and those who do not conform to these rules are eliminated as “outsiders,” or assimilated. In terms of international relations,

equality with neighboring spaces is guaranteed, and how those boundaries are determined and maintained becomes the story of the birth of borders. Insofar as international law defines national borders, research on borders begins in this area. In other words, to the extent that physical boundaries shape space in geography, and in the sense that research on international law begins with the determination of rules, it was a natural progression for border studies to take geography as its mother and international law as its father. It is because of this historical background that most academics and experts who study borders have been geographers, and international law practitioners are responsible for the practice of knowledge obtained from border studies. Thus, the process by which the concept of national borders spread throughout the world is what underpins this research community.

The International Boundaries Research Unit (IBRU)[5] was created in 1989 to bring together diplomats and experts from around the world to accumulate skills and provide training on a variety of subjects, ranging from the concept of borders to how to chart maps and draw lines, whether on land, river, or sea, and over various terrains. According to Martin Pratt, a long-time practitioner and director of the organization, the concept of boundary-making was created by Thomas Holdich in 1916, but that it was Stephen Jones' classic work, *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners*[6], that gave it substance. In fact, Stephen Jones was deeply involved in the practice of border demarcation in the period between World War I and World War II. According to him, the process of determining borders is divided into four stages: allocation, delimitation, demarcation, and administration. After its establishment, IBRU collected detailed examples of each of these processes and compiled techniques for demarcating space with boundaries. The accumulation of experience by members of IBRU in drawing the lines of the world may be due in part to the legacy of the British Empire that had ruled many colonies on the globe; however, the character of Durham, near the Scottish border, must have also given them a strong sense of the issues involved.

IBRU's strength may lie in the fact that while many European institutions and researchers tend to focus on terrestrial areas (e.g., the French are knowledgeable about border demarcation in West Africa, while German and Russian geographers have deep knowledge and strong interest in Asian land areas, etc.), IBRU also excels in analyzing maritime areas. According to IBRU, there are 26 disputes involving islands worldwide; of these, Japan is involved in three territorial disputes: the Northern Territories, Senkaku Islands, and Takeshima. Their reports also include analyses of the legal advantages of the nations concerned in each case, and they demonstrate a high degree of knowledge about the Arctic and Antarctic. For example, the Arctic EEZ partition map is highly regarded as being prescient of the "Fifty/Fifty" dispute between Russia and Norway.

Because of its style of resolving political disputes and organizing practical discussions about rationally drawn lines, IBRU's work can in some ways be considered classically positivist: their research considers borders to be real physical entities. However, their positivist approach is not limited to drawing borders. Administration is the final step in Jones' definition, meaning that border issues do not end with demarcation. For example, the border demarcation process for North and South America was largely completed in the nineteenth century (with the exception of a few disputed territories); however, the practical problems of border control became a prominent theme in North America thereafter. Specifically, managing the movement of people along the U.S.-Mexico border has become a major challenge for practitioners. Therefore, in a somewhat different context than the establishment of IBRU, North American researchers from



New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and San Diego in southern California have formed a study group to discuss North American border issues. Thus, the U.S.-Mexico border is the birthplace of the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS)[7], which was established in 1976.

As a counterpoint to the trend of studying the problems of physical borders, a research group evolved that sought to find the problem of borders in human activities, rather than in physical conditions per se. This followed the development of critical thought and critical research rooted in the deconstructionist thinking prevalent in Europe (which assumes that one's own activities always break down old structures and create new ones), and was triggered by the transformation of geography, especially political geography. After World War II, political geography sought to elucidate and theorize a spatial order divorced from human will and action. However, after being criticized in the 1970s for its "absence of humans," in the 1980s it adopted a critical approach and evolved into a discipline that delved deeply into the relationship between space and power. In doing so, various spatial comparisons were made about how territoriality becomes the source of power and, conversely, defines power. However, before World War II, and in some countries even after the war, this was discussed within the context of geopolitics and military science to justify the expansion of territory and its ideological nature. It tended to be understood as a political approach to spatial control and associated with the establishment of order by power. Specifically, the reason political geography in Japan is said to be in a "state of catastrophe" is that it became a servant of militarism pre-World War II; the field has since been avoided by researchers throughout the postwar period as positivist tendencies in geography have intensified. On the other hand, in the West, a trend of questioning new findings and approaches to political geography from a critical standpoint emerged, giving rise to studies on boundaries and borders that attempt to relativize the power of the state; these studies subsequently influenced the aforementioned studies on representations of boundaries, popularly termed as mental border studies.

European critical researchers' sensitivity to border and boundary issues has been greatly stimulated by the disintegration of the EU's extraterritorial borders, especially the socialist bloc of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The collapse of the Berlin Wall, the changes in Eastern European nations, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the associated civil war, the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, simultaneously resulted in the following three phenomena: the loss of boundaries and the birth of boundaries, called de-bordering and re-bordering, respectively, and the crossing of boundaries, all through the scrapping and rebuilding of states. Border studies, as a community, shares the term "bordering," which, through its overlap with ordering, provides a context for the analysis of transformations and collapses of order as "de-bordering," and the birth of new nations as "re-bordering." Existing borders, too, are constantly being affected by the transgression of borders, or "trans-bordering," that leads to new boundaries. In addition to the crossing and integration of existing boundaries, where existing spaces have been severely broken down and new territorializations occur, different boundaries have reappeared. Scholars accustomed to the permanence of Cold War-ordered space thus began to become enthusiastic about border studies. Above all, it was also a shock that these phenomena occurred with sequences of time by occurring in parallel across various spaces. The integration and separation of spaces simultaneously and intricately repeats as a generative process. This was the social reality that emerged after the Cold War.

These phenomena brought the classic problem of border demarcation back into the spotlight while questioning the mental aspects of boundaries and borders, including how people

have projected meanings onto borders in society, as well as the meaning of social construction. This has led to studies in this field finding resonance with a North American border studies community that had begun to accumulate knowledge on the critical mental borders of U.S. power, as seen from the Hispanic and Mexican viewpoint. It is no coincidence that North American researchers have begun to participate in the Border Regions in Transition (BRIT) [8] network, which was founded in Europe and held its first meeting in Berlin to explore the implications of the fall of the “wall.” Playing key roles at this time were Pertti Joenniemi of Finland; James W. Scott, a leading political geographer in both the U.S. and Germany; and Paul Ganster, a leading U.S.-Mexico border researcher in San Diego and a founding member of the ABS. This research exchange and personal relationship between the U.S. and Europe indicates a landmark period of transformation for the border studies community. Middle Eastern scholars such as David Newman, who studied physical border studies at IBRU, joined BRIT, which held its fifth conference in Israel and Palestine, expanding its scope. The Ninth Congress, held in 2007 on a border region between the U.S. and Canada, brought together many North American researchers and strengthened the ABS-BRIT “alliance.” This event was my entry point to this research field.

### **Various Border Stories**

Positivist research is often criticized by Western scholarly groups focused on representational studies and social construction; critical geopolitical theorists also criticize positivist research as considering boundary issues only from the vantage point of power and the state. For example, while it is illegitimate to view the work of IBRU as mere remnants of colonialism just because the UK has accumulated a mass of examples from around the world, the approach of actors who view these issues from the perspective of the state is incompatible with that of groups that adopt the approach of postmodernity or criticality, whether in dispute resolution or line drawing. In contrast to the constructionists who constitute the mainstream positivist researchers in Europe, Serghei Golunov, who analyzed trans-bordering disputes between Central Asia and Russia in Volgograd, Russia, and developed research regarding the issue of border management between Europe and Russia through his stays in San Diego, Durham, Estonia, and elsewhere, emphasizes positivist interpretations by focusing on the practical aspects surrounding Russia; however, he has not been well received within the European context, with his strong tendency to think in terms of “peaceful borders.” There are European border studies groups located in Nijmegen, near the German border in the Netherlands; Joensuu, east of Finland and near the Russian border; and, Grenoble, France—all of which are dominated by constructionist currents.

However, though European researchers maintain a postmodern orientation, when their approach is considered by researchers outside of Europe, there are many doubts as to whether this postmodern approach can be really sustained. The Asian Borderlands Research Network (ABRN)[9], centered in Amsterdam, consists of a group of researchers who draw from fields such as anthropology and geography to conduct fieldwork in the region; however, its organizational methods are, to a large extent, controlled top-down from Europe. Their discovery of James C. Scott’s “Zomia,” a self-sustaining and de-nationalized community of Southeast Asian mountain peoples in the border regions, led them to reorient their borderlands research; ABRN was established to lead research on the whole of Asia. However, it seems not to have full capacity to penetrate into the East Asian research community throughout Eurasia—from Russia, China and Japan, and so on, where there are large linguistic and regional differences.

Presently, they are developing well on various “Asias” but still focus more on empirical studies on “Asian borderlands” not necessarily on the theoretical progress of border studies itself and in comparisons and correlations with other regions except “Asia.”

Similarly, the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE)[10] is a research network based on anthropology and area studies that focuses on Africa. This network is led by Edinburgh researcher Paul Nugent. Compared to India and Southeast Asian countries, which already have a sufficient number of independently organized research groups, here it seems unavoidable that Europe would lead the way, given the difficult divergence within Africa based on various colonized paths, from which independent research groups have not yet emerged. However, here as well, closer collaboration with area studies in Francophone Africa and its positioning within a global context will prove essential. This network’s active participation in the June 2014 ABS World Congress (Finland and Russia) was certainly an opportunity for the expansion of this new community. BRIT XVI was organized by African researchers headed by Willie Eselebor in Nigeria with great success in 2018.

Finally, the enlargement reach of the ABS should be noted: special sessions were held in India in 2015 and in New Zealand in 2016. The ABS World Congresses have also developed: the second one in Vienna and Budapest in 2018 and the third one in Israel in 2023.

### **Harder or Softer?**

Each region has its own history, situation, culture, and people. Outstanding achievements in historical and area studies are often discussed in terms of their one-time or unique nature. Geographical knowledge, in contrast, starts from the ability to compare all spaces. Is it really possible to combine the various border situations in North America and Europe, as well as all the related research? At first glance, it seems difficult to compare Eurasia and Asia with North America and Europe, as in the former, borders cannot be demarcated and conflict phenomena appear everywhere. In fact, when Mexican researchers are shown Japan’s border issues, or Russian researchers visit Southeast Asian border regions, they report observing differences alone.

And yet, there are examples where such impressions have been overcome. There are, for instance, the arguments of researchers from the Middle East region, especially Israel, which, with its close proximity to Europe, still bears the imprint of colonial rule. These researchers are critical of Western, especially postmodern, arguments—that is, analyses that emphasize boundaries not as physical but as social constructions, fabricated by human minds. For example, Anssi Paasi, who leads the constructionist current of border studies in Finland, is a pioneering researcher who has read the Russian-Finnish border region in a multilayered way by using its representations as subject matter; however, his reports always create an image of the border as if it can be manipulated freely in the human mind. An Israeli researcher who was asked about this, began to vehemently criticize Paasi, asking, what is the actual contribution of constructing such “peaceful borders” over and over again? He further stated that the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East cannot be changed. Scholars of border disputes in Asia and Eurasia will certainly derive satisfaction from such a claim. Of course, as seen in the debate over whether to call this barrier a “wall” or a “fence,” Middle Eastern scholars are sensitive to the symbolism and mental connotations of boundaries. This means that even if the conflict is unresolved, and even in pre-demarcation spatial situations, as long as there is a border, and especially if this border is permanent, it is easy for people to project their ideas onto the border

and construct various stories. In essence, this raises for us the question of how important it is to overlay the social construction dimension onto the physical boundary issue when thinking through these problems.

In fact, especially since the end of the Cold War, some Eurasian border disputes that seemed irreconcilable have been resolved, and some unresolved disputes have stabilized. The most prominent example is the Sino-Russian border region, which inherited the Sino-Soviet border dispute. With the completion of border demarcation, the debate has begun to shift to how to manage this border and border regions. Some questions include: How to preserve the environment of the border river Amur? How to manage Chinese cross-border migration? How to mitigate deep-seated mental conflicts between Chinese and Russians? How to establish a border trade that connects the region? How to develop regional and local economic cooperation across the border? And so on. If we consider similar issues, we can see that there are many cases where the experience of the U.S.-Mexico border region and the EU could be useful. That said, in contrast to the reduction of national border disputes on the Eurasian continent, maritime disputes are on the rise. Could it be argued that the borders of Eurasia will never stabilize? Yet an analysis that de-bordering and re-bordering proceed simultaneously in a variety of forms is also a primary finding from European border studies. Hence, even if there are differences in the justification for and degrees of conflict, there is no reason to assume, for example, that it is “unique” to Asia. Moreover, as a matter of fact, Asian conflicts seem no less serious than those between Israel and Palestine.

A frame of reference for organizing this transcontinental boundary phenomenon is Jones’ process analysis of borders discussed above. Let’s organize the four stages of allocation, delimitation, demarcation, and administration as a timeline. Conflicts in certain parts of Asia are only in the preliminary stages, while others, such as Sino-Russian relations, have entered the post-demarcation stage. Various subdivisions could be made in administration; however, if the flow from North America to the EU is along the lines of interdependence and integration, it is possible that these cases can be referenced. Furthermore, it is necessary to keep in mind that a border line does not always move forward. A close examination of knowledge that was reaffirmed after the end of the Cold War reveals that (b)ordering not only simultaneously causes de-bordering and re-bordering, as already mentioned, but this phenomenon also reverses the timeline. An integrated region may be once again divided by boundaries.

To the extent that re-bordering means that once-formed lines break and reappear in different spaces, it is theoretically possible for any region with peaceful and stable boundaries to break down and return to conflict. Of course, because human behavior is conducted with reference to history, those wishing to not repeat past mistakes may contribute to preventing conflict. Conversely, if human psychology was reconstructed in some manner, the possibility remains that conflicts would intensify as revenge for the past. The validity of the timeline is not based on the theory of development stages, but rather in its capacity to make us aware of the long-lasting and never-ending chain of events in which a border dispute, even if it is in the demarcation and administration stage, can nevertheless return to the initial stage if the border is broken down by political conflict. Furthermore, if the experience of conflict becomes more predictable across spaces, it will be easier to opt for deterrence than for escalation; in other words, learning from the mistakes of others may lead to further innovations in the management of borders. If we liken it to the techniques of geography, the scale of border studies, so to speak, always “scale-jumps” from small politics to big politics.

### “Four Stage” Timeline and Permeability

Another aspect to consider when comparing borders is the discussion of what borders do and do not allow through. It may be easier for readers to understand this if it is expressed as a kind of filtering based on boundaries. Oscar Martinez in his famous book, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*[11] (1994), presents four interesting types in this regard. Martinez’s argument for demarcating borders in terms of alienation, coexistence, interdependence, and integration is related to the characterization of border regions discussed below, but it is also a typology of the membrane of the border itself.

Let us compare some examples from around the world based on the Martinez model. A fully integrated region no longer has boundaries within; it is a “boundary” only to the extent that it is a point of passage for people and things. With the integration of EU countries, the former borders that functioned within the EU have lost their meaning. If the maximum permeability of things and people is guaranteed, the character of the region as a border region will surely fade. Conversely, the increased permeability of the EU’s internal borders makes the management of the EU’s external borders a weighty problem. The questions of who to allow passage, and what to let pass, form the crux of the matter. The finding here is that the boundaries are, so to speak, shifting. Indeed, the birth of integrated regions (territorialization) can create new boundaries, each with its own characteristics, such as alienation, coexistence, and interdependence. The enlarged boundaries of the EU may be at the stage of coexistence or interdependence, but the level of permeability differs in the south and east. Specifically, African and other immigrants are pouring in from the south, allowing for comparisons with the problem of Mexican immigration on the North American border.

Borders are filtering mechanisms. As long as national borders are long lines, their permeability varies from place to place. A border that is militarily alienating in one place may allow for coexistence in another. The India-Pakistan border is generally in a state of severe conflict, but even so, the border between Lahore and Amritsar has been opened to third-country nationals, making it a tourist destination and an “open” place where traders engage in commerce with bags slung over their shoulders. The Pakistani side of the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan, for example, from Peshawar to Jalalabad, is famous for being a federally administered tribal area that is not administered by the Pakistani government except for roads, but rather self-governed by the Pashtuns living in the area. Although it appears to be a strict military border, the same Pashtuns live on the Afghan side of the border, which was established during the British rule, and local Pashtuns can come and go relatively freely. In this way permeability varies from place to place, even along a single border, and even at some alienated borders, people living there can easily travel back and forth depending on the location. The Martinez analogy is useful, yet, without a fairly microscopic analysis that identifies not just the relationship between Country A and Country B, but regional and local characteristics and the permeability of people and goods at the borders of each region, it fails to hold up for global border comparisons. As such, border comparisons require fine-grained research operations, such as conducting daily examinations at the micro-level within a country for a national comparison, but also translating this into other micro-comparisons beyond the country, as well as into a macro-context beyond the country. Many studies have yet to reach the level of theory, with scholars making sweeping comparisons as well as generalizing and exaggerating micro-cases. Perhaps this is why so many researchers are attracted to the depth and potential of border studies

research.

In any case, comparisons and cross-references are useful, especially regarding issues related to administrative technical systems such as customs, immigration, and quarantine. Additionally, biometric authentication for border crossing, which has become common in recent years and is being promoted for worldwide adoption, is growing into a major research area within border studies. International sociology, which is centered on migration studies, is strengthening its ties with border studies because of the growing significance of mutually reassessing the meaning of transnational migration and borders that manage migration due to globalization, and because of the expected development of the function of border studies in the future.

Despite this, the relationship between migration studies and border studies is problematic to a certain extent. As long as immigrants are, so to speak, globalized actors who freely transcend space, it is difficult to speak of limitations of space. This is because tracking immigration in relation to space often forces researchers to target populations spread across the globe. The part of migration studies that has utility for border studies is when migrants' stay or residence is associated with space. Of course, if their final destination is known, then it is simple to make deductions; however, if it is only a waypoint composed of bounded spaces, then that can be taken up as well. If the permeability of the border carves out space, then immigrants penetrate from one space to dwell in another. For example, migrants from North Africa pass through the Mediterranean Sea and enter the EU by using Italy as an entry point. Russian travelers use Finland, where visas are easier to obtain, as a waypoint to travel to other EU countries. Refugees from Syria, who have been in the spotlight in recent years, travel from Greece to Hungary via Macedonia on their way to Germany; however, Hungary has built a fence inside the EU to prevent this. Functional differences at the border regulate the movement of immigrants. Similar cases can be analyzed in relation to specific spaces and boundaries, such as Mexicans crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, Vietnamese traveling from the Russian Far East to Europe, or the Chinese doing business in the Sino-Russian border region. Rather, if the movement of immigrants, which seems to be a borderless phenomenon, is actually regulated by borders, I believe that international sociology and border studies can look forward to a fruitful collaboration. In Japan, relevant studies are also emerging, such as those by Hideki Tarumoto, on the connection between borders and immigrants[12]. In the future, an increasing number of migration researchers and sociologists are sure to understand the usefulness of border studies.

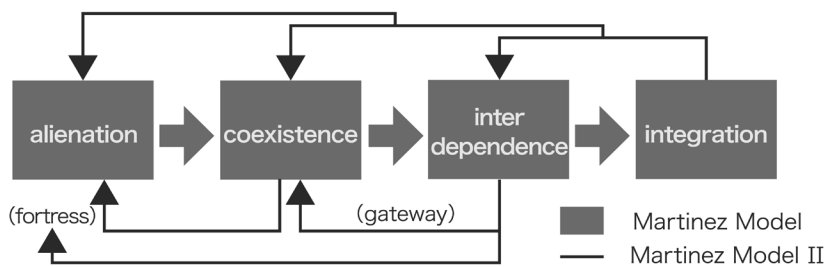
### **Reshaping Border Studies**

Here, I would like to review three tools from border studies that I think are particularly useful. The first is the restructuring of timelines, the second is the transformation of permeability, and the third is the comparison of levels of social construction. I have already mentioned that Martinez classified the boundaries in four stages: alienation, coexistence, interdependence, and integration; however, he also modeled this as a shift from the former toward the latter. For him, the main reason why "alienated" borders, in other words, border areas that were only a kind of "fortress" on the frontlines of military conflicts, have acquired the character of peace and coexistence and interdependent characteristics that connect people, is the declining significance of national borders in terms of security. He asserts that economic globalization has also brought business opportunities to border regions, for example, the development of Mexico's maquiladoras (tariff-free import systems for raw materials, machinery, etc. for products for

export) under NAFTA.

In Martinez's model, in North America, the process of progress is seen as a progression from conflict over borders to demarcation, and subsequently to economic cooperation through NAFTA while dealing with border control, including immigration control; in Europe, the chronological progression of the creation of the European Community after World War II, specifically from the EEC to the EU; the conclusion of the Schengen Agreement, that liberalized the movement of people within the region; and, the introduction of a common currency, the euro, has long been understood to be a one-way progression from conflict to integration. However, as I have already mentioned, the contemporary global and regional order is not unilinear; regions stable in their interdependence can be suddenly cut off at the border and turned into the frontline of conflict. The phenomenon of returning to the "fort," so to speak, occurs frequently. The ongoing Ukrainian War since 2022 clearly demonstrates the "four stages" as reversible. Here, I propose the updated Martinez Model applicable for more various borderlands. The timeline construction (pattern analysis by time series and de-timelines of bounding phenomena) must be an essential analytical tool.

Another perspective for considering borders is trans-borderization. Border studies can be viewed in terms of a space, for example, a region; however, it is also possible to analyze the function of the border itself, which is usually treated as an object, by taking it up as a subject.



**Transformation of Border Region Type**

If the existence of a border can be understood to have the same function in any region, then it is possible to compare vertically and horizontally what the border membrane does and does not let through; when it lets something through and when it does not; and, even when it does let things through, to what extent and degree is its passage managed. This is permeability, which has its roots in physics.

The third is the method of comparing levels of social construction, which is a level analysis of human representational activities and their politics with respect to physical boundaries. Indeed, physical boundaries can be larger or smaller depending on their construction. I have been following the Sino-Russian border issue empirically for many years and have seen representations of the "Damansky/Zhenbao Island" dispute grow both larger and smaller in Sino-Soviet and Sino-Russian relations. In March 1969, the island, only roughly one square kilometer in size, suddenly became a battleground. Subsequently, it became a symbol of the Sino-Soviet conflict, and the people in this region were mobilized. On the other hand, after Perestroika, the two countries, aiming for reconciliation, rushed to resolve the border issue under the slogan of "Do not repeat the 'Damansky/Zhenbao Island' situation," and eventually succeeded. Currently, as the border issue has been completely resolved[13], only a few people

remember the name “Damansky/Zhenbao Island.” Thus, as evidenced above, it is interesting to position changes in social construction related to conflicts according to the era.

Border Studies, still in progress, has plenty of room to be developed both empirically and theoretically for future. I hope someone will follow in the footsteps of Ulises and succeed his will and endeavors, thus contributing to more a peaceful and stabilized world order.

[1] Takeshi Hamashita, “Memories of Ulises Granados as an Advisor in Japan” in the volume.

[2] Appendix “CV,” in the volume.

[3] Ulises Granados, “Mexico as a Buffer Zone between Central America and the U.S.: the Chiapas Border,” in the volume.

[4] Akihiro Iwashita, *Japan’s Border Issues: Pitfalls and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2015); “Special Section on Japan’s Borders and Borderlands,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 26-3 (2011).

[5] <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/ibru-borders-research/>

[6] Stephen Jones, *Boundary-Making: A Handbook for Statesmen, Treaty Editors and Boundary Commissioners* (Getzville: William S. Hein & Co, 2000). The first edition was published in 1945.

[7] <https://absborderlands.org/>

[8] <https://conferencealerts.com/show-event?id=199195> (the latest in 2018)

[9] <https://www.ias.asia/programmes/asian-borderlands-research-network>

[10] <https://www.aborne.net/>

[11] Oscar J. Martínez, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994).

[12] For example, Hideki Tatumoto, “Why restrictive refugee policy can be retained? A Japanese case,” *Migration and Development* 8-1 (2019).

[13] Akihiro Iwashita, *A 4000 Kilometer Journey Along the Sino-Russian Border* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2004).

**\*This paper is an updated version from chapter II of Akihiro Iwashita, *Nyumon Kokkyogaku: Ryodo, Shuken, Ideology* [Introduction for Border Studies: Territory, Sovereignty, and Ideology] (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 2016).**



**Ulises Granados and Akihiro Iwashita in Comala, Mexico, 2016**