*Boundaries and Territoriality in South Asia: From Historical Comparisons to Theoretical Considerations**

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This article examines the theoretical salience of territoriality, particularly in South Asia, by comparing the histories of the region's three most contentious boundaries—Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe lines. It argues that four distinct avenues are central to theoretical considerations on territoriality in South Asia: the role of liberalism in colonial construction of state; international and domestic dimensions of geopolitics; disruptions in demographic and cultural contiguities produced by the boundaries; and the nature of sovereignty resulting from the experience of colonialism. Traditional lenses for studying boundaries and territoriality offer limited analytical purchase. The article posits that critical geopolitics and history-intensive approaches allow a better grasp of material and discursive dimensions of territoriality. Such an eclectic consideration is especially suitable for studying territoriality in South Asia given the region's cross-border complexities, both real and symbolic.

Much of International Relations literature is woven around interactions between states. Yet, there remains a relative lack of theoretical attention paid to territoriality—that basic and necessary condition of statehood. Indeed, as Tuomas Forsberg observes, 'Although territoriality is often mentioned as a defining element of the international system it is usually just mentioned, not theorized' (1996: 356). Or, to quote John Gerard Ruggie, 'It is truly astonishing that the concept of territoriality has been so little studied by students of international politics; its neglect is akin to never looking at the ground one is walking on' (1993: 174). Territory is a bounded

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space, and boundaries act as its defining limits. Boundaries are symbols of political, physical and legal limits of a state. They identify the contours of state territoriality and, simultaneously, impact the nature of this territoriality by interacting with it.

Boundaries across the world have been sources of conflict and confrontation. Exceptions among them occur rarely. But some boundaries have been more disputed, more violent and more arbitrary than others. This relative situation of boundaries' varying dispute potential is attributed to imperial boundaries imposed upon polities of the colonized regions of the world. South Asia was no exception to this process. The modernizing urge of imperialism went hand-in-hand with imperial rivalries, and often boundaries were drawn to set the domains of imperial rivals separate. Imperialism's civilizing urge and imperial rivalries set in motion peculiar strategies of organizing the space of the subcontinent whose culmination, in phases, were the three boundaries—Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe. Indeed, so important was the concern with frontiers and boundaries for the British Government in India, that Ainslie Embree, using references in the indices to government records, shows that 'no other subject occupied so much of the time of the higher echelons of [its] political bureaucracy' (1989: 70).

The general scarcity of scholarship on territoriality and the processes of state-formation in international relations is made acute by the paucity of such studies on South Asia. Moreover, studying territoriality in the region becomes important given the salience of territory in its colonial and postcolonial histories. Colonialism was an enterprise entrenched in territorial conquest. When the so-called natives began asserting their identity, territory was its most prominent location and its most stable anchor. Territorial politics galvanized local assertion after the Partition of Bengal in 1905. When this local assertion diversified, claims of separate identities were invoked with independent territorial states as the cherished goals of the future. The denouement of colonialism was not cathartic, in the sense that territorial Partition in 1947 made possible the emergence of postcolonial states on the logic of loss and gain of territory. Arguably, territory has been the most important referent in their subsequent interactions. Since decolonization was so inextricably linked with territorial anxieties (over losses and gains) postcolonial South Asia has been said to be made of 'peasant states'. Indeed, territorial violation has been deemed the ultimate injury to claims of sovereignty.

The three boundaries have been extensively historicized and studied. What appears to be missing is their comparative analysis in a single study to gain theoretical and conceptual insights into territoriality. Such comparative studies are useful. As the historians Baud and van Schendel (1997) suggest in the context of comparative histories of boundaries, a retrospective analysis of historical events helps understand the underlying processes more comprehensively. Since boundaries in the region succeeded territorial conquests, and represent the culmination of the process of constructing modern nation-states, revisiting them may offer new perspectives on territoriality. This is the task of this article.

Impressive corpuses of literature, partisan and objective, exist on the three boundaries.[1] It would be otiose to reproduce their summaries. The highlights in the histories of their construction, however, can be briefly outlined.

The Durand Line is the present international boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It derives its name from Sir Mortimer Durand, foreign secretary of British India, who negotiated the boundary for his government. It was agreeably enforced upon the Afghan ruler Abdur Rehman Khan through a formal agreement between Afghanistan and British India on 12 November 1893. Imperial rivalry between Russia and Britain had made Afghanistan a strategic sandwich throughout the nineteenth century. The British sought to convert Afghanistan into a buffer state to avoid any contacts with Russia. The Treaty of Gandamak (1879) institutionalized this objective by according the British the right to conduct Afghan foreign and economic relations. Nearly all of Afghanistan's boundaries were negotiated by Russia and Britain through imperial diplomacy in which respective Afghan rulers had little or no say (see Fraser-Tytler 1962; Lamb 1968). The Durand Line was the last major boundary to be negotiated and became the most contentious one. The boundary cut into the heart of the Pushtun territory, dividing them between British India and Afghanistan. The arrangement was not to the liking of either Abdur Rehman or subsequent Afghan rulers. After the Third Anglo–Afghan War, the British signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi (1919) with Afghanistan and freed it from the clauses of Gandamak. However, as the possibility of Partition came closer, Afghanistan started making a case for the inclusion of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) within its territorial realm. But even in 1944, such proposals were rebuffed by Britain by claiming that it was internal matter of British India (Ewans 2001: 7–9). When it became clear that Partition was inevitable, the Afghan government questioned the procedural aspects of the transfer of power arguing again for the inclusion of NWFP in Afghanistan. Shortly after Partition, Afghanistan abrogated all treaties made with British India and challenged Pakistani claims to have inherited the rights of the colonial government (Roberts 2003: 120–121). In the ensuing years, Afghanistan demanded the establishment of an independent Pushtunistan (which it could manipulate to make one of its provinces). The turmoil across the Durand Line has not ceased since.

The McMahon Line is the international boundary between the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet Autonomous Region of China and derives its name from Sir Henry McMahon, British India's foreign secretary. Tibet and Afghanistan

[1] For representative accounts of various dimensions of the Durand Line, see Khan (2005), Fraser-Tytler (1962), Misdaq (2006), Roberts (2003), Ewans (2001), Lamb (1968), Sykes (1981), Bilgrami (1972) and Dupree (1973). On McMahon Line, see Maxwell (1971), Mehra (1974), Gupta (1974), Singh (1988), Hoffmann (1990), Lamb (1966) and Woodman (1969). On the Radcliffe Lines, see Chatterji (1999), Tan and Kudaisya (2000); van Schendel (2005).

were termed buffer states in the Anglo–Russian Agreement of 1907. Earlier, Lord Curzon had sent a punitive expedition to Tibet which resulted in the Lhasa Convention of 1904. The Convention obtained for British extra-territorial rights in Tibet, and in a peculiar arrangement, also recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet courtesy of an adhesion agreement with the Chinese in 1906. It was in this background that the boundary was controversially negotiated in a tripartite conference involving British India, China and a representative of the Tibetan government in Simla and Delhi between 1913 and 1914. Interestingly, the Chinese representative had only 'initialed' and not signed the boundary agreement and the accompanying maps (Maxwell 1971: 48). In any case, the McMahon Line was soon forgotten by the British Government in India and the boundary agreement was not printed in the 1929 edition of the official compendium of Aitchison's *Treaties*.[2] When this omission was discovered by Olaf Caroe, a deputy secretary in the foreign and political department, in the late 1930s, copies of the 1929 edition were recalled and the McMahon Line agreement was inserted retaining the old publishing date (Hoffmann 1990: 21). But the boundary remained on the backburner given China's internal turmoil and the weakening of British power in India. After India's independence, New Delhi renounced all extra-territorial rights in Tibet secured by the British. The boundary dispute, however, was left to be settled in more peaceful times. That was not to be, as the Sino–Indian war of 1962 testified.

The Radcliffe Lines partitioned colonial India into East and West Pakistan and India. They form the current international border between India and Pakistan (dividing colonial Punjab) and India and Bangladesh. Curzon's partitioning of Bengal in 1905 altered the trajectory of territorial politics in the subcontinent. Competing imaginations of realizable territorial polities along religious lines was its legacy. Though Bengal's Partition was undone in December 1911, three decisive events took place in those six crucial years: one, formation of the All India Muslim League, which championed the cause of Pakistan in years ahead; two, announcement of the Morley–Minto reforms in 1909, the first major liberal–constitutional package for the subcontinent, which introduced separate electorates for Muslims; three, founding of the Punjab Hindu Sabha, which became All India Hindu Mahasabha in 1915 and whose right-wing impulses provided inspiration for various exclusionary territorial schemes in the coming decades. The period of Bengal's first Partition gave birth to forces that later lead to the second Partition of Bengal and the subcontinent. The three-way politics over liberal reforms—like the Government of India Acts of 1919, 1935, the Round Table Conferences, the Cripps Mission and the Cabinet Mission Plan—in the subsequent years also contributed to the

[2] A record of Treaties, Engagements and *Sanads* relating to India and Neighbouring Countries.

eventual Partition of 1947. The boundaries were decided in five weeks and declared on 17 August 1947 (Chatterji 1999). Though there have been minor disputes along both stretches, their essential legitimacy has not been disputed by the three countries involved.

Comparing the Lines

Many contingencies collided and colluded to produce the Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe boundaries. The acquisition of the territory of the subcontinent, essentially and initially for trading purposes, brought the colonial administration in contact with its frontier zones on eastern and western flanks. Soon, the theatre of European balance-of-power politics apparently shifted to the subcontinent. The British Government in India found itself uncomfortable with vast tracts of forbidding frontiers that could be used by its imperial rivals to destabilize British India. This is clearly manifest in the case of the Durand Line which was a result of two (Anglo–Afghan) wars and nearly a century of imperial diplomacy between Russia and Britain. A broadly similar tale is obtained in the history of the McMahon Line. Warren Hastings, the governor general, sought a trade route to China through Tibet in the 1770s. In the face of Tibetan reluctance, successive colonial administrations either failed to 'open' Tibet or were unenthusiastic about launching armed forays to achieve that result. It is only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century—when the Russian conquests of Central Asian khanates made decisive British interventions in Afghanistan and Tibet urgent—that the move towards securing boundaries of and with the two countries intensified (see Maxwell 1971; Singh 1988; Woodman 1969). The Radcliffe boundaries were an outcome of a series of geopolitical manouvres that began with Curzon's Partition of Bengal. Arguing that Bengal's first Partition in 1905 activated the impulses which were instrumental in the subcontinent's Partition in 1947 makes the link explicit. Curzon penchant for intervention in the geographical peripheries of the subcontinent—such as the Partition of Bengal—left a powerful legacy.

Since security of its Indian possession was one of the driving forces behind the British policy of turning these frontiers into boundaries, it had implying corollaries. On the north-western flank, Afghanistan was sought to be turned into a buffer state. For the longest time, imperial China was not perceived as a threat to British India. Its forward push in the dying years of Manchu rule was the immediate cause of McMahon's diplomacy at the Simla Conference. The more important factor was the Russian threat. Just as Afghanistan was sought to be converted into a buffer state, Tibet was set on that course too. The Anglo–Russian Agreement of 1907 achieved precisely these results with regards to Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. Technically, the accord made Tibet a neutral buffer with Chinese suzerainty,

recognized British interests in Afghanistan and divided Persia into three zones, with a neutral Persian buffer between the two empires (Gupta 1974). While clinical differences between neutral buffers and interest-oriented buffers have their salience, there is a larger interpretive point to be made: the creation of a sovereign British India—which is exactly what linear boundaries were supposed to achieve—came at the cost of stifling of Afghan and Tibetan sovereignties.

Colonial constructions as these have been, the three boundaries have arbitrariness hardwired in their linearity. None of them were a cartographer's delight though they did become, in the course of time, sources of considerable diplomatic uneasiness. Their geographical irrationality was bettered only by their callous separation of demographic—social, cultural, linguistic and religious—continuities. The McMahon Line, considered as largely separating forbidding and uninhabited territories, was drawn in disregard to political–territorial realities. The Tibetan influence in Tawang—which China claims on behalf of its Tibet Autonomous Region—was one such example. Linguistically common populations were separated by Radcliffe Lines in Bengal as well as in the Punjab. The extreme example of arbitrariness was the Durand Line which cut Pushtun speaking Pathans with shared adherence to Islam into two.

Each of the three boundaries inaugurated conflicts of varying degrees, most prominent of them all being the Sino–Indian war of 1962. Three Knights of the British Empire—Mortimer Durand, Henry McMahon and Cyril Radcliffe—gave their names to these boundaries. The first two were also foreign secretaries of British India and were instrumental in their personal capacities for securing these boundaries. This perhaps indicates the importance of frontiers in foreign policy establishment of the time. Finally, if security was the more immediate reason for constructing these boundaries, especially the Durand and McMahon Lines, the guiding impulse behind turning fuzzy areas into sharper edges—the creation of a modern state—had its roots in the way the colonizers thought about space. Liberalism provided the philosophical rationale for what came to be known as 'liberal imperialism'. Focusing upon the relationship between liberalism and the British rule in India offers some insights into understanding this process, especially since the politics of Partition appears so matted with liberal reforms.

This brief comparative outline provides an opening to conceptual and theoretical insights into the nature of boundaries and their impact on territoriality. In particular, four distinct relationships present themselves for examination: the influence of British liberal thought and practice on territorial strategies used in the subcontinent; the role of imperial geopolitics on shaping subcontinental territoriality; the impact on people (or demographic continuities) of British frontier policy; finally, and flowing from the previous three, the contested nature of sovereignty in this part of the world as informed by territoriality. These relationships could be explored in the light of existing scholarship on boundaries and territoriality.

Territory, Territoriality and Boundaries

A territory is a geographical space, bounded either formally or informally. Territorial space is punctuated by geographical features and human beings and their ways of life. In that sense, 'territory *is not*; it *becomes*, for territory itself is passive, and it is human beliefs and actions that give territory meaning' (Knight 1982: 517) (emphasis added). It is, therefore, a social construct (Forsberg 2003). The becoming of a territory is also a place-making exercise. This conversion of space into place—a meaning-making venture—is a political, economic, social, cultural and, in the modern world, a legal process. In other words, space, when organized with certain intent, becomes territory. How does territoriality accrue from territory? In answering this question some of the leading scholars and theorists of territoriality differ. One of its foremost theorists, Robert Sack writes:

> Territoriality in humans is best understood as a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area; and, as a strategy, territoriality can be turned on and off... Territoriality is intimately related to how people use the land, how they organize themselves in space, and how they give meaning to place (1986: 1–2).

For James Caporaso, territoriality is 'a principle of political organization that delimits the spatial scope of public authority' (2000: 7). John Ruggie, in his seminal piece on territoriality, views it in terms of organization of political space (1993: 148). Thus, territoriality is taken to be both political organization of space as well as organization of political space. (The former is more instructive because it impresses the impact of political strategies on geographical space rather than assuming the presence of a political space prior to application of a strategy of organization.) In the words of another scholar it is a 'spatially defined political rule' (Kahler 2006: 3). John Agnew understands by territoriality a strategy which uses territory for political, social and economic ends (2005: 441). Like territory, territoriality also results from conscious political action. That being the case, territoriality is not an ahistorical attribute, function or strategy. Indeed, as scholars like Andreas Osiander (2001), Benno Teschke (1998), Bruce Bueno de Mesquita (2000) and Ruggie (1993) point out in their discussions on origins of territorial sovereignty in Europe, territoriality emerged in historical space and time, and in so far as modern western territoriality is concerned, it depicts a rupture from feudal past. The notion of rupture is crucial to understanding the specificity of territoriality as a concept.

The social and historical geneses of territoriality make it a complex form of arrangement (Kratochwill 1986) and an aggregated concept (Caporaso 2000). Precisely this complexity lends territoriality to classification. This has two dimensions. In the first, we find territoriality actively participating in efficient classification

by geographical area ('ours' from 'yours', for example), that is, in reference to spatial location (Sack 1986: 32). The modern system of states is an example of this form of classification, similar in form and diverse in content. In the second, scholars have suggested that territoriality as a category diversifies to taxonomical reading. Forsberg classifies territoriality into six forms: Existential, Operational, Ecological, Biological, Psychological and Political (1996: 359–62). Mathias Albert examines the functioning of territoriality in international politics and its embeddedness in the contemporary world system. Towards this end, he offers three dimensions of territoriality. First, territoriality as an epistemological and social–structural principle is intimately linked to processes of *modernization* and *rationalization.* These have special relevance for understanding colonial territoriality. Second, territoriality is a *code*, a *symbolic reference* to territory which underlies the construction of collective identities. And finally, territoriality is a *form of segmentary differentiation* of world society. Global political system, in this third dimension, appears internally segmented into state territories (Albert 2001: 6–11) (emphases in original).

Territory, because it is bounded by definition (and indeed, through political action of claims and assertions), produces a self-imposed limit on its expanse. The edges of these limits have been variously called frontiers, borders and boundaries. The literature that celebrates the march of western modernity on territory follows the teleological footsteps of Friedrich Ratzel's famous seven 'laws' of state expansion (Jones 1959). This scholarship holds that modern state-formation is (also) exhibited in the conversion of frontiers into boundaries, linear lines defining hard edges of modern states.[3] Any political organization of space establishes a link between boundaries at the edges and the territory within them (Maier 2000: 816). Thus, territoriality becomes a site representing the simultaneous relationship between boundaries and (political) behaviour within those boundaries (Kahler 2006: 3). As a spatial strategy territoriality attempts to simplify issues of control and 'provides easily understood symbolic markers "on the ground", giving relationships of power a greater tangibility and appearance of permanence' (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999: 598). Consequently, territoriality produces and focuses attention on boundaries. Boundaries act as disruptive agents of territoriality. The former signify the point at which 'something becomes something else', where the 'way things are done' changes, and where certain rules of behaviour no longer obtain and certain other rules take over (Migdal 2004: 5). Boundaries attempt to disrupt social (or demographic) continuities and achieve this by separating 'us' from 'them'—arguably the most potent form of the self–other binary and the

[3] Kristof's (1959) remains the most comprehensive discussion on this. The Indian experience has been succinctly presented by Ainslie Embree in his 'Frontiers into Boundaries' (1989: 67–84). For a general discussion on boundaries and their historical lineages, see Fischer (1949).

most effective strategy of exclusion in the modern world. Boundaries enable territoriality to reify power, depersonalize social relationships, oversimplify and distort social realities, all in the interest of control. The cumulative result of these tendencies makes territoriality inherently conflictual with marked tendency to produce rival territorialities (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999: 598).

The politics of space has both material and discursive dimensions. The discursive aspects of spatial politics have been most fruitfully highlighted by the advent of Critical Geopolitics. The works of one of its leading exponents, John Agnew, is especially relevant to the present concern.

As a leading theorist of Critical Geopolitics, Agnew (1998; 2005; 2007) has offered reflective and penetrating critiques of modern geopolitical imagination. Crucial to his critical examination of the spatial ordering of world politics are certain concepts which, put together, unravel the generally obscured assumptions of links between territory, politics and people.

The launch of global territorialism in 1492—the beginning of the Columbian epoch—produced what Agnew terms the politics of 'Visualizing Global Space'. This visualization privileges the European (and later Euro–American) perspective of the world. Two characteristics of such visualization of global space stand out. The first involves 'seeing the world-as-a-picture, as an ordered structural whole (which) separates the self who is viewing from the world itself' (Agnew 1998: 11–31). It is a typically modern European perspective. Visuality gains prominence and the map—seen as the most objective account of the discovered world—is taken to be an accurate report of what is there. The second aspect of this visualization produces binary geographies. The world, seen as a structural, whole is punctuated by boundaries of 'us' and 'them'. Boundaries are fundamental to nearly all societies. The novelty of this imagination lies, however, in visualizing the world beyond the horizon—the world belonging to 'them'—as a source of chaos and danger (ibid.: 20). The most conspicuous dichotomy it has produced, Agnew claims, is the one between global West and global East. This differentiation becomes a template on which more local differences, especially of the European colonies, are mapped. And these local differences of the 'them' are read, referred and made salient by juxtaposition with the 'worldwide distinctions rather than local differences *per se*' (ibid.: 12) (emphasis in original). The only way the local can have any meaning is in relation to the global, without which difference cannot be articulated. This single-perspectival strategy was instrumental in colonial history of the subcontinent, which, in turn, served as justification for imperialism.

The second of Agnew's contributions relevant here is what he calls the strategy of translating 'Time into Space' (ibid.: 32–48; 2007: 140–41). The world, divided into blocks of space, is understood in terms of different time periods relative to the idealized historical experience of one of the blocks: the West. A product of eighteenth century European dynamics, this tendency characterizes some places—usually the colonies—as '"following in the footsteps" of others as they recapitulate

their previous history' (Agnew 2007: 140). This viewpoint enables the economic development of some places to be equated with their superiority in other respects such as the universality of their knowledge claims. The turning of space into time juxtaposes the temporal stage with the spatial category, and as such, 'it provides a natural link between the European past, on the one hand, and the global present outside of the modern world, on the other, in terms of what the latter lacks and what the former has to offer to make up for this deficiency' (ibid. 1998: 33).

The third formulation offered by Agnew that is critical to our concern is what he calls 'The Territorial Trap'. He defines the territorial trap as 'thinking and acting as if the world was made up entirely of states exercising power over blocks of space which between them exhaust the politico-geographical form of world politics'. Three assumptions underpin the territorial trap. First, that modern state sovereignty requires clearly bounded territorial spaces. The distinctiveness of the modern state rests on its claim to total sovereignty over its territory. Defence of the security of its spatial sovereignty and the political life associated with it is the primary goal of the territorial state. This assumption dates from fifteenth century Europe onwards when, in the course of four centuries, the location of sovereignty shifted from the monarch's person to territory. Second, that a fundamental opposition exists between domestic and foreign affairs. This view is a legacy of western political theory which likens states to individual persons struggling for wealth and power in a hostile world. A most obvious example of this is Thomas Hobbes's grim portrayal of the state of nature which is used to argue for differentiating between hierarchy in domestic sphere and anarchy beyond the borders of states. As a corollary, civic culture and political debates are possible within the boundaries of the state. The reason of states rule supreme outside. Thus, processes of economic and political competition get fixed at the level of system of states. Third, that the state acts as the geographical container of modern society. Social and political identities get defined within the boundaries of states, thereby precluding the possibility of understanding them at different geographical scales. (think of Punjabis or Tamils in South Asia.) The second and third assumptions, argues Agnew, date mainly from the twentieth century onwards (Ibid.: 51–59).

These conceptual formulations help us understand the unique 'fonts of power' (to pluralize Agnew's term) that inform modern geopolitical imagination, and especially, the ones that were crucial in European (and British) understanding of and action towards its colonial possessions. The four relationships could be examined in the light of this engagement.

Liberal Imperialism and Territoriality

European history in the nineteenth century was characterized by teleology and a denial of the history of the 'others'. This had implications for the rest of the world. Liberalism, with John Locke having offered its most comprehensive account,

was the philosophical counterpart of this historiography and a guide for British conduct in its colonies. Perhaps nowhere was Liberalism more successful and more contradictory than in its application in the subcontinent.

Their inextricable linkage makes the Partition of South Asia and the independences of India and Pakistan a simultaneously-told story. The territorial consequences of Partition flow, mainly, from similar and same set of events and processes that occasioned the independence of the two countries in 1947. Liberal constitutionalism's facilitating role in such independence has been commonly acknowledged in literature. The territorial implications of this 'liberal imperialism' have been highlighted by Uday Singh Mehta's immensely important *Liberalism and Empire* (1999). Mehta's study of British liberal thought in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the context of the British empire, especially imperial India, fills the gap in scholarship on empire to which British liberals remained largely indifferent. Particularly important are his reading of Locke's *Treatises* and a liberal interpretation of Edmund Burke's passionate intervention in nearly all matters concerning colonial India. Mehta's scholarship outlines the trajectory of liberalism's civilizing mission and its consequences on territoriality in the subcontinent.

If Europe, in its Age of Discovery, had found blocks on earth's surface that, in relations to its own sense of progress, were backward, despotic, irrational, tribal, chaotic and dangerous, then imperialism could be (indeed was) justified by dedicating it to make the people and the lands they inhabited progressive, democratic, rational, modern, rule-bound and safe. Though this, in that much abused term, was the 'white-man's burden', the culture and practice of bearing it varied with the nature of the colonial power. Spain, for example, preferred the Bible. Britain too used the Bible but did not forget its liberal iconoclasts. This important difference produced liberal imperialism of the British. History and progress were important to British liberalism. The possession of colonies meant that liberal ideas and practice be imported to such territories. Mehta cites the historiography produced by James Mill and John Stuart Mill with regard to India to impress just how this was achieved. Starting mid-eighteenth century European historiography had achieved firmly universal orientation, even if history was written from local stand points (Mehta 1999: 82–83). The next hundred years saw the likes of Turgot, Condorcet, Hegel, Marx, the Mills and Macaulay producing a historiography that, adhering to the teleological promise offered by Enlightenment, equated history with two notions: history as a plan; and that plan representing progress. The Mills followed this credo which associated the idea of historical progress with the stages of human development (ibid.: 83–84). The elder Mill's multivolume *The History of British India* judged India as a backward civilization, indeed so backward that even European feudalism scored better in comparative similarity of their stages. John Stuart Mill's contribution to this notion was that representative democracy—that veritable ideal of classical liberalism—was suitable for only that civilization which has reached a stage 'when mankind have become capable of being improved by free

and equal discussion' (Mehta 1999: 85). James Mill's *History* primarily aimed at ascertaining the civilization stage to which India's extant conditions corresponded. Since he found that civilization as representing the 'rudest and weakest state of the human mind', imperialism became an historical necessity, or empire was to be the historically sanctioned guide for India's progress to upper stages in order to catch up with the civilized world, and perhaps prepare for a modicum of self governance (ibid.: 87–92). (Note the uncanny similarity between the geographical binaries Agnew discusses and the trend of European historiography; more pertinently, that between Mills's *History* and Agnew's notion of translating 'Time into Space'.)

Knowledge—scientific, rational and objective—of and for colonial India was required for its progress, which would (or could) enable it to move towards representative democracy. Different strategies were invoked to achieve this result. Benedict Anderson (1991) has offered three such strategies through which colonialism helped forge imagined communities or nations: drawing of accurate Maps, conducting periodical Censuses, and establishing Museums. More relevant as political strategies of organizing space are maps and censuses, together embedding people within territory. Mapping of the subcontinent's space, best chronicled by Edney (1999) and Barrow (2003), was as much an exercise in constructing its territoriality as it was about inscribing empire on this land beyond the horizon, as it were (see especially, Edney 1999: 293–340; Barrow 2003: 1–34). Cartographers and surveyors like James Renell, Colin Mackenzie and George Everest were instrumental in defining the place in relation to liberal goals of the government, which was exhausting '(our) stock of geography' in the mapping of India (see Robb 2007: 93–126). Similarly, censuses began to be carried out starting in 1780 (Cohn 2003: 224–54). Walter Hamilton produced the first imperial gazetteer of India in 1820. The period between 1820 and 1870 saw similar efforts, though these were not strictly modern in their method. Had it not been for the turmoil in the aftermath of the Revolt, the first comprehensive census would have been undertaken in 1861, but it came a decade late. The census of 1872 divided the communities into four categories: Aryans (Brahmins and Rajputs), Mixed, Aborigines and Muslims. The 1881 census identified over fifty million Muslims in the subcontinent or one-fifth of the population. Forty percent of them lived in Bengal alone (Akbar 2002: 195). The information was crucial to spatial politics played around Bengal two decades later. The timing of these censuses is important. For now, people of the subcontinent were subjects of the British crown, and liberal doctrines, in the main, influenced the legality of their subjecthood, if not citizenship. Evident in these processes are the key indicators of progress as the Mills would understand it. Their chronological development closely resembles the strategy of liberal historiography's impending stages of colonial India's progress. Space was mapped and turned into imperial territory; people—now in a legal–political, though differentiated, relationship with the crown—were counted, classified and allotted their

place in imperial demographic register as confined within that territory. True, frontiers were yet to be turned into boundaries, political representation had yet to be granted to the elites, but intensive penetration of the empire in the societal concerns, despite promises to the contrary by the Queen's Declaration of 1858, had manifested a marked shift in the nature of imperialism.

By the end of the nineteenth century, liberal imperialism had configured the territorial space of a subcontinent in a manner that facilitated diverse set of local political strategies of engaging the empire. The petitioning Congress was one of them, which, with lawyers trained in British jurisprudence, most suitably adjusted to the climate. The intrusive nature of the colonial administration was preparing a colonial state. Strategies of state-production required objectification of communities. Drawing elites, including those of religious communities, into political processes of the emerging state was crucial to maintaining its legitimacy. Representation was the touchstone of liberal imperialism and required to be introduced for the latter to have any impact (Robb 2007: 43). Electoral democracy was its form. David Gilmartin argues that electoral democracy was closely related to ordering and systematizing of society that the British had undertaken (2003: 191–203). This process established standard identities of each community for the colonial state. The colonial state formulated its policies towards the natives keeping these fixed identities of communities in mind. This had critical implications for the Muslim 'community' whose leaders (like Sayyed Ahmed Khan) were more agreeable to proximity with colonial masters. Bengal's Partition was a watershed in this regard. For now, the colonial government could introduce the Muslim community it recognized to constitutional reforms, while offering it separate electorates through the Morley–Minto Reforms.

On impress here are contradictory outcomes of liberal imperialism. This was largely a three-pronged process which involved introduction of constitutional reforms by the colonial government and the responses of Muslim and Congress leaderships. The turmoil of politics in the lead up to the Partition of 1947 was woven around what the colonial government was willing to offer, how the Congress Party responded to it and why that did not translate satisfactorily for the Muslim League, a party heading the Muslim community the British identified. When the last major British effort at reforms—the Cabinet Mission Plan—failed to impress local elites, the logic of separate electorates was stretched by Jinnah with able, if unintended, assistance from the Congress Party to demand a rational structure that could accommodate the aspirations of that separateness. That is where Pakistan, as a nation-state, comes into being. Yes, there was considerable ambiguity in the Pakistan Resolution which requires explanation.[4] But more

[4] It was the first resolution placed on the second day of the League Session on 23 March 1940. It read: 'That it is the considered view of this Session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on

instructive was Jinnah's speech at Lahore through which he declared Hinduism and Islam to be not just two separate religions but two distinct social orders that have produced different religious philosophies, social customs and literature (see Moore 1983). By implication, and echoing the rational impulses of liberal imperialism, 'They were therefore two "objectively" knowable communities, defined by outward, rationally perceived characteristics and histories' (Gilmartin 2003: 201). Jinnah was, in political and social outlook, unlike the community he was leading towards a separate state. That perhaps was the only way Pakistan could become real. It is difficult to not detect the influence of imperial rationality in Pakistan's motto as offered by Jinnah: 'Unity, Faith and Discipline'. Or, for that matter, in his insistence on 'equality' in his dealings with the British and the Congress, through which he appeared to be fulfilling the junior Mill's desire. Jinnah, after all, was leading a part of mankind towards freedom by insisting on equality.

Concomitant with liberalism's conspicuous neglect of empire is the lack of theoretical attention to imperial territorial space. Mehta engages Lockean conception of private property to expose the bases of this neglect. Locke's *Second Treatise* explains the origins of private property by arguing that land, given in common to all by the Creator, becomes private to an individual who mixes his labour with it. Consequently, Mehta interprets, Lockean Liberalism makes territory inherently worthless and it is the use value of individual labour that gives territory its meaning (1999: 123–25). Thus, the earth becomes worthless in its materiality and inert in its sentimental force (ibid.: 126). Therefore, the 'initial commonness of the earth does not inform subsequent social norms or forms of shared and collective identification, just as the latter, when they do exist, do not draw on the antecedent condition of commonality' (ibid.: 125). This 'posture of reciprocal indifference' in Lockean Liberalism has four extremely relevant implications. First, by divesting territory of any emotive force, Locke blocks the possibility of the generation of sentiments over shared territory and through that of a shared political identity (ibid.: 127). Two, through same strategy, Locke denies locational attachments as having any individual significance for political identity. Third, with the imagining of territory as a physically and emotionally vacant space sans binding potential, Locke makes it conceptually (and practically) impossible to articulate the origins and the continued existence of distinct political societies or nations (ibid.: 128). Finally, specifically flowing from the previous implication is that Locke's account cannot lend significance to, nor account for, the fact that

the following basic principles, viz, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority, as in the North Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute "Independent States" in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign' (cited in Akbar 2002: 250).

political societies have territorial boundaries (Mehta 1999: 130). The denial of territory's material worth and emotive force amounts to it being treated as a vacant space. This rings especially pertinent for the British Empire's colonial possession. Effectively, this translated into denial of the claims of territoriality of Indian people and their distinctive political identity. Again, the similarities with Agnew's concept of geographical binaries are self-evident.

The only thinker to have realized the brutalities of such liberalism-in-practice and to have spoken in defence of India's topographical specificity, its precolonial identity consecrated by its people's culture, was Edmund Burke. In 1782, Burke moved the House of Commons against Warren Hastings for the crimes that the latter's administration had committed in India, which Burke alleged included the violation of property, the destruction of native customs and institutions, and the dishonouring of native women. In Mehta's reading, Burke's pleadings at the trials sharply differed from the Lockean Liberalism he saw being practiced by the Company. Burke braids place conceived in territorial terms and its significance when seen in social terms to underline the importance of territoriality as constitutive of individual and collective identity, which was denied to the natives by the Company (Mehta 1999: 133–35). This is a moment of immense philosophical and practical significance in the history of South Asian territoriality. For if Burke's pleadings had borne the results he desired, the trajectory of the colonial state, especially after mid-nineteenth century, would perhaps have altered. Philosophically, this is the moment when Lockean Liberalism's concrete effects on colonialism are diagnosed, analyzed and discarded for its intolerance.

Liberal imperialism failed to acknowledge local nationality or nationalities (territory being an important component of nationality) which, in turn, served as justification, after the Revolt of 1857, for liberal and progressive reforms 'in which the empire is no longer justified on the basis of the rights and needs of the metropole, but rather on grounds of the political inadequacies of the colonies' (Mehta 1999: 122). Unsurprisingly, the colonized began to write back. Recent research has argued that nationalist re-imagination of India as a geo-historical entity began in the 1860s (Goswami 2004: 166–208). The Congress, in the aftermath of the Partition of Bengal, officially endorsed the objective of *swadeshi swaraj* or national self government. It is interesting that *swadeshi*—usually associated with home-made goods—comes from *swadesh*, meaning national territory. To extend Goswami's argument about nationalist re-imagination of India (ibid.: 242–43), this was the territorial reference which partly drove the agitations against Bengal's Partition between 1905 and 1911. All political equations of nationality claims and their denials emerged perhaps decisively transformed after 1911. In the discursive construction of nation, *Hindustan* gave way to *Bharat*, as a real, enduring, spatially–bounded national entity for the Hindu communalists and also for the Congress. This was a double reconstitution of spatial categories which, very late in the day,

impelled a third such reconstitution. At one level, the colonial state was configuring territorial space in accordance with rational, objective criterion it had devised. At another, the Hindu conceptualization of the subcontinent's space was fast eroding the legacy and nostalgic legitimacy of 'Hindustan', a spatial entity constructed by Mughal administrative and cartographic traditions. If territorial India was being made Hindu why would the Muslims want to live in it? Doubts gradually gave way to territorial suggestions from the likes of the poet Iqbal and others, like Rehmat Ali. But it was Jinnah who provided political capital to doubts and capitalized upon them. Seen in perspective, the territorial ambiguity of the Pakistan Resolution was a continuation of its predecessors. There was no surety of success till it came.

Liberal imperialism denied the fact that political societies had territorial boundaries. Though the territorial outcome of August 1947 pleased none of the contending nationalities, they were keen to have their boundaries clearly defined and demarcated. It was a political credence they could not afford to ignore. Cyril Radcliffe's job was to ensure that it happened before independence came to India and Pakistan. He was diligent enough to keep his brief and deadline in temporal harmony. Pakistan and India were, of course, states unsure of their territorial boundaries for a short while. But they respected the outcome by and large. For a decolonization process of such magnitude the Radcliffe boundaries have been surprisingly well-respected and upheld by the two, and later, three countries. The same philosophical logic drew India into upholding the legitimacy of the McMahon Line, though it was dealing with an anti-imperialist comrade in China. The Chinese were never in control of the territory south of the McMahon Line. India could at least bring its history to bear upon its claims. But its chief justification was based on defending the legal–institutional position it had learnt well and inherited from the British. Pakistan, mourning the loss of territory it never possessed (Kashmir), cannot afford to concede to Pushtun territorial claims south of the Durand Line. Its upholding of the validity of the boundary with Afghanistan owes inspiration to similar experiences that guide its boundary policy with India, no matter how uncertain and brittle that country has appeared since its existence.

Modern Geopolitics, Critical Readings

It is interesting that Rudolph Kjellen, the Swedish intellectual who coined the term 'geopolitics', did so in the context of discussing Sweden's boundaries (Ó Tuathail 1996: 44). Though geopolitics acquired prominence and notoriety only after Nazi Germany used it to destructive effects in the 1930s and early 1940s, its intimacy with the expansion and consolidation of European (and later American) imperialism can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century. Modern geopolitics

must be studied along with modern geopolitical imagination. Territorial aggrandizement was central to European imperialism of late nineteenth century and it is within this imperialist framework that geopolitics first arose as a concept and practice.

To quote Ó Tuathail,

> As the Eurocentrically imagined blank spaces on the globe succumbed to the sovereign authority of governmental institutions and imperial science, the surface of the globe appeared for the first time as a system of 'closed space', an almost completely occupied and fully charted geographical order. The dawning of this new order of space, together with the transformative effects of technological change on the exercise of imperial power across space, provoked the emergence of a distinctive genre of geo-power within the capitals of Great Powers; the name this new genre of geo-power acquired was 'geopolitics' (cited in Chaturvedi 2002: 2).

This historicized definition of geopolitics allows for the assessment of the impact of imperial geopolitics on the territoriality of the subcontinent. Two aspects, in particular, merit attention. First, the consequences of Anglo–Russian imperial rivalry on the process of state-formation in the region. Second, Curzon's Partition of Bengal and its relations with the Partition of 1947.

Balance-of-power politics among European imperial powers was crucial to maintaining stability and equilibrium of Europe itself. Territorial concessions (especially of colonies) and mutual recognition of such arrangements was part of this system set up by the Concert of Vienna in 1814–15. When conflicts arose, a system of managing potential hostilities from breaking out was needed. The Great Game was typical of this process. Its most important feature was the transfer of balance-of-power politics to South and Central Asia. Kratochwill argues that boundaries were central to imperial management of such potential conflict scenarios, especially in subjugated colonial territories. This was achieved by management of the *type* of exchange mediated by boundaries, and by manipulation of the *location* of boundaries (1986: 36), which clearly obtains in the case of Afghanistan. The problem of the defence of India had led the British to search for the 'scientific frontier' with Afghanistan. This location kept shifting in response to Russian advances. The settling of Afghanistan's northern frontier, in turn, facilitated the British to impose the Durand Line. A similar process is obtained in the history of the McMahon Line. Arguably, McMahon's manipulations at the Simla Conference were in response to the Chinese threat. Here again the specificity of the boundary location was forced upon rather than arrived through discussion.

Sought for the purpose of securing India's defences, these boundaries were also meant to create a territorially sovereign colonial India. Colonial sovereignty

is an oxymoron in itself. But it highlights the politically uneven nature of state-formation in the region. The same process that sought to make India—a colonial territory of prime significance—a sovereign entity, ended up creating curious social–political formations out of Tibet and Afghanistan. In the vocabulary of imperial geopolitics, these became 'neutral buffer' with Chinese suzerainty (Tibet) and 'buffer with recognized British interests' (Afghanistan). Indeed, the Anglo–Russian Convention of 1907 officially endorsed such statuses for these weaker territorial entities. In other words, state-formation in the region was an uneven process clearly manifested by the fact that colonial sovereignty of British India was achieved at the expense of the sovereignties of Afghanistan, and, indirectly, Tibet. The British extracted similar arrangements with Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. This trend poses critical questions to our understanding of the emergence of a 'competitive' state system in the region.

Read critically, geopolitics can be conceptualized as a 'way of seeing whereby groups and individuals, political elites, and the institutions and intellectuals of statecraft attempt to spatialise politics by implanting maps of meaning, relevance and order' on the political universe they inhabit (Chaturvedi 2005a: 238). Critical Geopolitics also demolishes rigid oppositions of 'domestic' and 'foreign' (an aspect of the territorial trap) to foreground the spatial strategies of conducting politics and its attendant consequences. This helps understand Curzon's territorial division of Bengal as a continuation of his larger geopolitics in British India's frontier affairs. It also helps view more clearly the spatial aspects of the subcontinent's politics in the run up to the Partition of 1947. In fact, so saturated was the politics of this period with regards to claims and counter claims of rationally defined territorial space that Chaturvedi, borrowing from French geographer Yves Lacoste, has called it a period representing the 'excess of geopolitics' which culminated in the Partition of British India (2005b: 125–60).

Bengal's division in 1905 was an act that fixed the identification of religious communities with defined territories. In a discursive sense, this enabled the possibility of imagining nations along exclusivist lines which the subcontinent had, in the main, not been used to. The three crucial events before it was undone in 1911—the Morley–Minto Reforms, establishment of the Muslim League and the Hindu Sabha—contributed to development of exclusionary impulses defined in territorial terms. These were, whether intended or not, critical consequences of Curzon's geopolitics. The new political field offered possibilities for contending imaginations of nations. The triumphant version was religious nationalism producing the territorial state of Pakistan. Seen thus, the discursive privileging of a particular form of geopolitical reasoning becomes evident. 'Territory and its representations are at the heart of geopolitics' (Chaturvedi 2005b: 125). The legacy of Curzon's action in 1905 was that it ended up privileging one particular representation of territory—a territorial state for the Muslim nation—undermining all other

representative formulations. Indeed, as Chaturvedi underlines, contending territories were up for partition in 1947: British India of imperial imagination and mapping, *Akhand Bharat* (Indivisible India) or *Bharat Mata* (Mother India) of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's right-wing, patriarchic imagination, *Dinia* [sic] of Rehmat Ali's imagination and *Achhutistan*, the imagined homeland of the untouchables (Chaturvedi 2005b: 128–46). The Partition of the subcontinent in 1947 was an exercise in reductionist geopolitics in so far as it privileged one outcome over all others. In doing so, the Radcliffe Lines that testified to and fixed this outcome, imposed a culture of anxiety on the new nation states. The temporary nature of this reductionism burst when East Pakistan became Bangladesh, thus making acute Pakistan's identity crisis. Since independences of India and Pakistan were fundamentally about loss and gain of territorial claims, a zero-sum approach has historically informed their mutual interactions. In common parlance, such behaviour passes for territoriality. But territoriality is much more that mere state obsession with territory.

Contradictions of Territoriality

Territorial boundaries are disruptive agents in concrete and discursive senses. Concretely, they arrest the flow of humans across sovereign realms, while discursively, they are meant to represent the defining limits of imagined coherence of demographic groups. In the process, boundaries 'both shape and are shaped by what they contain, and what crosses or is prevented from crossing them' (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999: 594). The importance of territoriality as an organizing principle of social and political life lends, ultimately, this significance to boundaries. As Passi (1999) notes, the changing meanings of boundaries in the construction, organization and reproduction of social life also affects the way we understand territoriality. The three boundaries in question have also displayed similar characteristics. Their linearity has produced sharp edges which have simultaneously included and excluded clusters of demographic continuities in the subcontinent.

The essential contradiction between boundaries and people is best exposed by demographic mobility. South Asia has been a region characterized by mobility of people throughout its history. This is what makes its sub-regional commonalities unique, and in the aftermath of linear divisions, ironically curtailed. The historian Barun De offers a glimpse of the richness of this culture of mobility. Vedic movements onwards, the subcontinent has seen people crossing current territorial boundaries in and during a variety of political arrangements. The Mongoloid and Eastern Turkic people would cross the Karakoram to arrive in the southern areas of Gilgit, Kashmir and Hunza. Those in the upper Gangetic plains frequented western Nepal, as did the people from Madheshi Nepal to India. Similar patterns are available of people from Yunnan in China and Laos coming into Assam. The Santhals, Ho or

Munda tribes from the hills of West Bengal came to the plains for economic reasons (De 1997: 18–27). The Rohilla fighters (originally from Ruh in the southern Afghan mountains) built the principalities of Rampur, Shahejahanpur and Bareilly—the western districts of Uttar Pradesh. That region, called Rohilkhand, is a legacy these mercenary movements have bequeathed. Not to mention the ghazis from the Gangetic plains who fought with the Afghans against the British during the Second Anglo–Afghan War (Akbar 2002). Most of these movements have ceased to exist today. These boundaries have also disrupted the territorially stable but continuous demographic groupings, or nations as they can be called. Linguistic commonalities of the Punjab and Bengal were ruptured by imposition of lines premised on religious differences. Lahore and Amritsar have had more in common between them than the former has with Quetta or the latter has with Chandigarh. Tibetan Buddhist influence in Tawang continues though the tract is now a part of India. Pushtuns, sliced in two halves by the Durand Line, have racial, linguistic and religious commonalities which makes stark the irrationality of the boundary. In sum, these territorial boundaries have not only attempted to seal historic patterns of movements, but also divided nationalities.

The rationalization and objectification of communities the British had undertaken had simplified a rather complex picture. As far back as the roots of Pakistan can be traced, for any one evidence of desire for a separate homeland for Muslims emerging from that community's elites, there is a counter evidence of voices among the Muslims fiercely opposing such demands and designs. When the British devised policies for the Muslims, they had their own rationalized and objectified Muslim community in mind, whose self-serving elite was quick to kowtow to its colonial masters. The very first constitutional (Morley–Minto) reforms recognized the separateness of this Muslim 'community'. Subsequent interactions between the British and the leadership of *this* Muslim community eventually culminated in its successful territorial separation. But the problem was that a large number of Muslims, who eventually chose to not cross the new boundaries and move to Pakistan, were excluded from this objectified, rationalized Muslim community the British recognized. This trap of Partition came to the fore during the Simla Conference of 1945 where the Congress refused to be recognized as a party of caste Hindus alone and insisted on its right to nominate Muslims, which Jinnah opposed claiming he alone represented them. Having decided to stay back in India, these Muslims, trapped between rival claimants to their representation, declared their attachment to the country. However, Pakistan was meant to be a homeland of *all* of the subcontinent's Muslims, as Jinnah's Muslim League had continued to claim. The clarity of this assertion from those who demanded Pakistan was further sharpened by the Hindu Right's claim that Muslims in India did not belong to this land. The Congress had such elements within its fold too. It could not do enough to demolish

the doubts cast over the loyalty of the Muslims who denied that Pakistan was their homeland. The consequences of this process have not fared well for the Muslims in India.

Nations, writes Gyanendra Pandey, are constructed around a core or mainstream representing a majority. Minorities are constructed along with the nation, for they are the means of constructing such national majorities or mainstreams. 'Nations, and nationalisms, are established by defining boundaries' (Pandey 1999: 608). The Radcliffe boundaries sought to establish new nations and new nationalisms. In the process however, uneasy and hyphenated identities emerged: the majority of India became 'Indians', while the minority which stayed became 'Indian–Muslim'. The Indians became natural citizens, while the marginal minority, allowed to stay in the nation but not quite allowed to becoming its part, has had to persistently offer proof of its loyalty as a citizen. Pandey has chronicled the wide-ranging public suspicion of the Muslims who decided to stay in the immediate aftermath of the Partition and independences. The title of this much celebrated essay 'Can a Muslim be an Indian?' perhaps best captures the ruptures boundaries create in both real and symbolic senses. True, these boundaries have enabled postcolonial states of South Asia to draw 'sharper lines between citizens, invested with certain rights and duties, and "aliens" or "foreigners"' (Baud and van Schendel 1997: 214). But equally relevant is that these boundaries have rendered such distinctions fuzzy. A legal citizen can be, and is, treated like a foreigner, his/her loyalty constantly under scrutiny. Elsewhere, as the Pushtun nationalism exemplifies, state-accorded citizenship holds no meaning. These are contradictions of territoriality which cannot be satisfactorily explained by restricting our focus to mere physical–legal status of boundaries.

Pulls of Sovereignty

The problems with sovereignty are many and manifold. States-in-waiting covet it. States who have it wish to preserve it. For postcolonial states sovereignty becomes something close to being an existential identity; a basic fiction whose loss, partial or complete, must result in the loss of statehood itself. When sovereignty becomes so sacrosanct, the chances of it being (ab)used for other ends increase. It is not just that sovereignty has become a credo for states to live by. What is uncomfortable about the rhetoric and practice of sovereignty is that the promise of clarity it conveys nearly never translates into exchanges between its couriers. Indeed, it may be the most breached principle of international politics so diligently upheld by both its violators and the violated. Studying sovereignty in the context of empire returns contradictions, the most basic being the one between sovereignty and empire itself. Other questions too arise. If sovereignty is imposed by the colonizers, what happens to precolonial tendencies of sovereignty? How much

and what patterns of precolonial sovereignty survive the colonial period? And how do they get manifest in postcolonial states?

Sovereignty has generated much debate in international relations scholarship. Contestations abound over its origins, nature, location and future (see Hinsley 1986; Bartelson 1995; Osiander 2001; Teschke 1998; de Mesquita 2000; Ruggie 1993; Burch 2000; Walker and Mendlovitz 1990; Krasner 1995/96 and 1999 for a representative account) Daniel Philpott, in his richly argued *Revolutions in Sovereignty* defines sovereignty rather elegantly as 'Supreme authority within a territory' (2001: 16). Three central elements emerge from the definition. One, sovereign is one who has authority. Two, sovereign's authority must be paramount among all claimants or holders of authority. Three, this supreme authority must be territorially defined. In other words, territoriality is central to the conception and practice of sovereignty. Elaborating on this third element of sovereignty, Philpott argues that the holder of sovereignty rules over people who are to be identified by virtue of their location within borders (2001: 17). The centrality of territoriality to theory and practice of sovereignty directs us towards an interesting claim put forward by a few scholars on the internationalization (if it can be so called) of sovereignty. Philpott in *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, Hendryk Spruyt (2000; 2005), David Strang (1992), among others, argue, from varying perspectives, that the process of decolonization represents an extension and expansion of the Westphalian system of sovereignty whereby the decolonized states got appropriated into the logic of Westphalia. Ewan Anderson has summarized the relation of boundaries with sovereignty established with the Peace of Westphalia:

> It was acknowledged that boundaries drawn around territory circumscribed a single political and legal unit over which the state had sovereignty. The idea of zonal frontiers between core areas of control was rejected and from then, individuals owed allegiance to a specific territory which linked them to sovereign control (quoted in Maier 2000: 817).

If this is an acceptable description, then the histories of boundaries being studied here and the impact they have had on postcolonial sovereignty exhibit tendencies that do not fit the claim made above.

The relationship between sovereignty and territory in the precolonial subcontinent and the British imposition of alien institutions to reconfigure this relationship is an interesting site to explore. In their discussion on what they call the 'Problem of Difference' in international relations, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney argue that insistence on formal sovereignty of states, attributed to Westphalian settlement and based on its expansion all over the world, 'testifies the difficulties we face in responding to differences in culture, religion, and mode of life' (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 22). This 'Westphalian Deferral' (ibid.: 21–45), poses difficulties in appreciating the multiple and overlapping nature of sovereignty that existed in

precolonial spaces. For example, the Mughal rulers were primarily concerned with the flow of revenues from working of the land. As long as the revenues kept flowing in, the administration left the claim of local cultivators over territory intact. This suggests that overlapping claims to a piece of territory existed in precolonial India (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004: 191–97). The British rule, with its insistence on rationalizing space, eclipsed this flexibility with institutions like the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Similarly, the process of converting territorial frontiers at the peripheries into boundaries disrupted the outward oriented flexibility of the Mughal Empire. Argued by Embree (1989: 67–84), this point needs little elaboration in itself, but its import is vital. Empires, including premodern ones, have had frontiers acting as zones of transition because they offered flexibility in territorial conquests. Now, the area that ultimately became West Pakistan (and is today's Pakistan) has historically been that zone of transition (excluding, perhaps, the Punjab that the British constructed, a part of which is a Pakistani province). Even at the height of their administrative efficiency, effective British authority did not really prevail in tribal territories of the NWFP and Balochistan. In his famous Romanes lectures on Frontiers, delivered at Oxford in 1907, Curzon identified three borders on the exterior, to the northwest of British India: the border of 'direct administration', the frontier of 'active protection' or the Durand Line and an outer or 'strategic frontier' comprising the far northern and western borders of Afghanistan (cited in Robb 2007: 69). Robb argues that despite the demarcation of formal boundaries (like the Durand Line) 'there were zones of influence that still lay outside any formal state' (ibid.: 69). Pakistan, realized on one of these 'zones of influence' became, and continues to remain, 'a symbol of this imperfection', as Robb calls it. The history of independent Pakistan has been, among other things, a struggle about maintaining its territorial sovereignty. Bangladesh cut into it in 1971. A set of issues, internal to Pakistan in the NWFP, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Balochistan continue to question the claim of the Pakistan state's supreme authority within its territory. In as much as this could be an accident of geography that Pakistan must bemoan and attempt to salvage, it also indicates the contested sovereignties that boundaries, when imposed upon frontier zones, produce. In other words, sovereign Pakistan is an example of perversion produced by uneasy imposition of colonial–modern territorial strategy on precolonial tendencies.

The relation of people with land has crucial symbolic import on and for territorial sovereignty. Legalistic institutions, coercively enforced, did produce ruptures. Such ruptures, especially for the subcontinent's Muslims, produced a variety of experiences. It is interesting that the ambiguous nature of territorial specificity of Pakistan till the last months of its realization remains open to explanations. In attempting to explain this, Gilmartin notes that for the Muslim community in general (which included the British recognized Muslim community) attachment to particular territory was essential to its moral sovereignty (1998: 1081–89). Pakistan

as an Islamic state would have had this moral sovereignty writ large. But what about the hopes of saving the attachment to territory? The last effort which could have solved this dilemma was the Cabinet Mission Plan. Violence erupted on its failure, making the location of communities on the right side of the proposed boundaries the decisive condition between life and death. This is where the territories that would form Pakistan registered their support to the impending state. The symbolic relevance of this process is that support for a new sovereign territorial state came hesitantly, with reluctance and amidst a spiral of violence escaping from which required categorical choices to be made. It is questionable how far the traits of Westphalian sovereignty hold true here.

The puzzle of why the legitimacy of boundaries being studied here has been upheld by the former colonial states while contested by those that were not directly colonized has been indicated earlier. It has also been pointed out that the construction of colonial sovereignty in India was achieved by denying the sovereignty claims of Afghanistan and indirectly, Tibet. The Treaty of Gandamak and the Lhasa Convention of 1904 institutionalized these arrangements. Afghanistan remained bounded by the terms of Gandamak when the Durand agreement was signed. Lhasa Convention remained in force when McMahon boundary was decided. Thus, the two issues—denial of sovereignty and the contested nature of the boundaries—are fundamentally linked. Moreover, they indicate two aspects of sovereignty crucial for it to be effective. In relations between states, sovereignty is as much about *recognition* of a state's supreme authority within a territory by other states, and especially by the border–sharing state/s, as it is about unilateral *assertion* to that effect. While Tibet's political future was overshadowed by Chinese control, Afghanistan was freed from the clutches of Gandamak, after the Third Anglo–Afghan War, with the Treaty of Rawalpindi (1919) guaranteeing full Afghan sovereignty, confirmed later by a comprehensive treaty in 1921 with the British. But, the fact that Afghanistan unilaterally abrogated all treaties signed with British India and challenged Pakistani claims to have inherited the treaty rights of the colonial government after the Partition, underlines the importance of the Durand boundary in polarizing the difference between Pakistan's assertion of sovereignty over Pushtun territory and Afghanistan's refusal to grant recognition to this sovereignty claim. Similarly, China too refused to recognize India's assertive claims of sovereignty on territory south of the McMahon Line. Sovereignty, seen from the perspective of colonial boundaries, emerges as a contested concept and one practiced in variety of complex ways. Generalizations, based on formal notions, do not adequately capture its diverse manifestations.

Sovereignty is not an absolute concept. Imposition of institutions and strategies that construct and sustain sovereignty does not return neat results. Precolonial tendencies persisted through the period of colonialism and perverted the independent institutions and strategies of proclaiming sovereignty. The outcome of this

process is that postcolonial sovereignties exhibit characteristics that question the supremacy of authority over a territory. Postcolonial territorialities, therefore, do not agree with the claims or logic of their Westphalian cousin. In doing so, they invite the need to pay attention to specificities of each colonial experience of constructing sovereignty.

Conclusion

This article has examined the theoretical salience of territoriality in general and South Asia in particular. By comparative examination of the historical specificities of the three colonial boundaries—Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe—the article highlighted the importance of studying territoriality in its historical embeddedness. It argued that four distinct avenues are central to theoretical considerations on territoriality in South Asia: the role of liberalism in colonial construction of state; international and domestic dimensions of geopolitics; disruptions in demographic and cultural contiguities produced by the boundaries; and the nature of sovereignty resulting from the experience of colonialism. Employing the lenses of Critical Geopolitics, it suggested that boundaries and territoriality cannot be studied in their purely legal–physical form. Their discursive dimensions are just as important. Such an approach also expands our theoretical understanding of territoriality.

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