

Trouble on the margins. Peace-building in the borderlands of post-Soviet Central Asia

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This paper explores peace-building in the borderlands of the Ferghana Valley, a large intramontane basin shared by Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Since 1991, international aid to Central Asia has promoted privatisation, market liberalisation and democratic governance, but also addressed a growing concern for violent conflict in the region. Such a potential for violence was mainly seen in inter-ethnic tensions over scarce natural resources. The paper argues that peace-building in the Ferghana Valley reconfigured the processes which constitute territory through altering social action and material space at the border. As a consequence, it interfered with ongoing processes of post-Soviet border delimitation. The paper thus questions the presumed apolitical nature of peace-building by arguing that in its unintended outcomes it became part and parcel of state territorialisation and nation-building projects in Central Asia. In this paper, I explore peace-building activities by a multilateral agency, an international NGO and a bilateral governmental donor in the Ferghana Valley over the period of 2000-2006. I examine their theoretical assumptions which bring forward a particular approach to conflicts over land and water, and the empirical outcomes of peace-building in the form of specific localised practices. The paper is positioned as an ‘ethnography of aid’. It approaches international aid as an ethnographic object, paying particular attention to aid’s socio-spatial narratives and effects. Empirically, the paper draws on my fieldwork in the Ferghana Valley between 2003 and 2007 both as a researcher (14 months) and a consultant for an aid agency (3 months). I combine the analysis of aid agencies’ textual representations and of data generated by interviews and participant observation in three in-depth on-site case studies.

Combatants Re-mobilized, Sovereignities Blurred: Governing the Kailahun borderland in post-war Sierra Leone

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The Kailahun district in Eastern Sierra Leone, bordering Guinea and Liberia, is often depicted as an epicenter of chaos, crime and rebellion. Located in an area of closed lowland rain forest, far off from the main roads connecting the bigger towns, Kailahun is referred to as the ‘last corner of the world’ – yet, a significant corner for shadowy activities and illicit flows. During the long-term civil war, this borderland served as a stronghold for the rebel movement, *Revolutionary United Front*, and came to host the most violent atrocities committed by militias, local defense forces as well as by the military. Today, the remains of civil war – the slaughterhouse, burned down houses and tanks without wheels – stand as reminders of the past but also of the potential for a new outbreak of conflict in the region.

This paper argues that rather than being a strictly marginal hinterland, isolated from the heartland society, the Kailahun borderland constitutes a space focalizing political transformations and emerging (dis)orders in post-war Sierra Leone.

With point of departure in ethnographic fieldwork conducted amongst ex-soldiers and ex-combatants in Sierra Leone since early 2006 - most lately, for six months in 2009, the paper unravels the dynamics of governance in the Kailahun borderland. Focusing on the re-mobilization of ex-soldiers and ex-combatants into official and less official political domains, it is illuminated how sovereignities are contested, negotiated and blurred by a multitude of actors with competing claims to authority.

The blurring of sovereignities is demonstrated through a case study of two young ex-combatants who recently became employed as revenue collectors on strategic border crossing points in the district. Rewarded for their loyalty to a former warlord and coup maker who now serves as the District Council Chairman in Kailahun, the two young ex-combatants have come to occupy powerful positions in the borderland; positions that are constantly challenged by local authorities who equally claim their right to power and wealth. By illuminating how the two young ex-combatants tactically navigate in a field of competing actors, sometimes positioning themselves as official tax collectors and other times as unofficial security guards, the paper furthermore sheds light on the blurring of informal shadow networks and more formal political networks. Against this background, the paper finally points to the role ex-combatants and ex-soldiers have come to play in fusing state and non-state institutions through a process of mobilization and militarization of patrimonial networks.

Agamben in the Ogaden: Violence and sovereignty in the Ethio-Somali borderlands

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This paper reconsiders a question asked by Talal Asad: “Where does the state ‘end’?” (Asad 2004). Asad’s question alerts us to the ambivalence of violence and order pertinent in the notion of state, sovereignty and its borders. We approach Asad’s question to examine currently fashionable notions of ‘state collapse’ and ‘ungoverned spaces’ in African hinterlands. Based on a historical review of political dynamics and centre-periphery relations between the Ethiopian state and its Somali inhabited territories, the paper sheds light on competing conceptions of sovereignty and governance in the Ogaden (or Ethiopia’s Somali region). Conventional policy discourse portrays the Somali-Ethiopian periphery as a frontier that lacks stability and civility. This viewpoint is supported by recurrent inter-clan conflicts, fighting between the rebel Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Ethiopian government troops and famines. Since 2007 a complex political emergency has taken foot in the Ogaden, which has fortified its image as a zone of anarchy and disorder that escapes state control. Contrary to this assumption, we argue that Ethiopia’s eastern lowlands are characterized not by state failure, but by a permanent state of exception, in which Ethiopian sovereignty re-institutes those who are included and those who are excluded. Rather than by state failure the Ethio-Somali borderlands are characterized by a specific border geography, which results from the contested appropriation of territory and people by the Ethiopian state. By spatializing a violent state of exception, Ethiopian sovereignty is most forcefully present in its remote pastoral periphery. Theoretically, we expound these dynamics by fusing Igor Kopytoff’s frontier thesis with Carl Schmitt’s writings on the state of exception and its recent reinterpretation through the works of Giorgio Agamben.

Borders as Centres: The Evidence from Africa

Markus Virgil Hoehne (with Dereje Feyissa)

State borders in Africa (and other former colonial contexts) usually are perceived as ‘artificial’ colonial constructs that divide and constrain people, and frequently are the root cause for political tensions or even military conflict. The conflicts of Somalia with its neighbours in the Horn of Africa in post-colonial time are a case in point. Any ‘positive’ aspect of state borders in the continent usually was related to the various creative strategies of locals who circumvent borders and survive in the borderlands. The borderlands may not be particularly comfortable spaces – frequently they are marginalised, or, to the contrary, heavily militarised zones guarded by the centre – yet, they offer certain opportunities for smuggling and clandestine political activities across borders for daring and well-connected entrepreneurs. In this context, researchers frequently stress the ‘subversive’ qualities of borderlands as zones of resistance and opposition. In contrast, this paper proposes to understand borders and borderlands as central since it is here that various resources are offered for smuggling, guerrilla politics, switching of ‘identities’ and political alliances, and tapping into different state systems offering various services. Interferences of the centre are not only resisted by borderlanders; in some cases, the centre is “co-opted” by the actors at the margin who understand very well that any modern state depends on borders and those who reside along them for security and national identity. By using case studies from Africa (mostly, the Horn of Africa), and putting them into dialogue with material from elsewhere the paper proposes a comparative perspective on resourcing borders and borderlands, and on the conditions involved. The conditions comprise the political distance of the borderlanders from the political centre, the significance a particular border and the related border possesses for the state actors, the depth of the (political and social) cleavages caused by the border, the degree of inter-state economic differentiation, the entrepreneurial skills of the borderlanders, their cultural schemes or cognitive differences, and changes over time. The proposed framework is certainly inspired by the works of Baud and Schendel (1997), Nugent (2002), Horstman and Wadley (2006), and others who outlined the complexities of borderlands and the sometimes counter-intuitive realities of border(land)-existences. Still, in its systematic combination of opportunities and conditions it goes beyond the existing literature.

The paper is dealing with the political leaders of the Aulad Ali tribes in the border region of Egypt and Libya. The political setting in the borderland is shaped by the complex relationship between different modes of political organization and rule. These relationships are best described by the term of “neotribal competitive order”. The neotribal competitive order represents a dynamic transformation dissolving the distinction between formal (state) and informal (not state) political organization. It also represents a specific innovation in which global and local models are merged and eventually turned into something new. The central agents of this order are represented by neo-tribal associations and their leaders. One can distinguish these leaders by generation and function as "Pioneers" and "Political Entrepreneurs". A particular group is represented by politically active Imam's, who are labelled as "Preachers". Nowadays the political entrepreneurs dominate the political arena. Most of them are "sons of the pioneers" and thus represent the successful reproduction of the intermediate rule. The term political entrepreneur is not an emic expression. It is related to the type of the "development-broker" introduced by Thomas Bierschenk (1998). The political entrepreneur however also acts beyond the world of development. In fact they organize the process of interlacement with and the appropriation of the state. The notion of entrepreneurship reflects the mixture of political and economical goals and the competitive character of these actors. On the other hand the term underlines their inventiveness and their creative potential in the sense of Schumpeters political understanding of the entrepreneur. The Islamic preachers have become increasingly important for the political processes in the borderland, particularly in the field of conflict mediation. They criticize the neo-tribal associations and the political entrepreneurs as well as the state and they promote themselves as an Islamic alternative. Thus the preachers pluralize and dynamize the political landscape of the borderland by acting as producers of islamic ideas and concepts but also as competitors of the political entrepreneurs. Conflict resolution through the Bedouin customary law or *Urf* is a central element for the integrity of the *Bedouin* society in the borderland. This applies to national as well as transnational and even to international relations. However the present practice of conflict resolution is characterised by a variant of legal pluralism which I call “competitive legal pluralism”. The term emphasises the competition among different providers in a market of conflict resolution. Here, we find different conceptions such as the Bedouin *Urf*, the state law and *Sharia* courts as well as different actors such as political entrepreneurs who act as *Mardi* (mediator) with a modified *Urf*, Bedouin lawyers who operate with the state law and islamic preachers who execute a specific variant of the *Sharia*. The process of mediation provides an intimate knowledge of societal processes and (power) relations. This knowledge can be transferred into other fields for strategic reasons. Conflict resolution is also a way to produce and establish a legitimate order. Those who are able to provide this form of order benefit through status and prestige as well as by a significant advancement of their power position within society.

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No condition is permanent: changing state/border relationships along the Goma/Gisenyi border

Recently plans have re-emerged to (re)materialize the border between Goma (DRC) and Gisenyi (Rwanda). Shacks littering the neutral boundary zone between these countries have to be demolished and in order to inscribe the border into the cross-border urban agglomeration of Goma/Gisenyi, plans are on the table to build a road following the Rwandan/Congolese border.

This renewed attention for a clear-cut border is not only apparent in the attention for the physical materialization of the border. Since 2007, the DRC has started to train a *police des frontières* within the framework of the national police. The first border policemen are now ready and will be deployed at the Goma/Gisenyi border in order to "[...] *surveiller celles-ci pour qu'aucun ennemi ne s'hasarde à approcher notre frontière, à la violer et à agresser même le pays*". As such, the state seems to be ready to –at least discursively- reclaim its monopoly on violence in the urban border regions. But the border police is also brought in to reinforce control on taxations, migration and customs, or as the governor of North-Kivu put it: "*La fraude est presque monnaie courante sous toutes ses formes. Elle est documentaire, elle est fiscale, elle est physique et donc, ce service va devoir nous aider.*"

Of course this tells us nothing about changing realities on the ground, and it is yet to be seen how these changes will affect cross-border transactions and exchanges. However, it does betray a changing perception from the centre on its peripheral boundaries.

In this paper we will take a look at the Goma/Gisenyi from a historical perspective. From part of the *zone contestée* in the early days of the European occupation till now this border has seen different contexts of state control and relationships to the centre. We will focus on moments in which the state has *tried* to control its border more closely, showing that borders are not only negotiated locally on a daily basis, but also on a larger scale and in the long run.

The Borders of India's Nation: Irredentism and the Affirmation of a Resurgent Naga Nation
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Although India presents itself as a nation-state with a common history of anti-colonial struggle, its territorial borders - both in idea and in practice - have always been heavily contested. Even today, India holds disputes with neighbouring China and Pakistan over large tracts of borderland in the Himalayan range. However, at the south-eastern fringes of these Himalayas, another lesser-known border conflict is also in full swing, aiming directly at the heart of India's nation-state idea. Since the 1950s, insurgents and civil society organisations have been fighting for a Nagalim or Greater Nagaland. The adherents of a Nagamese independent nation seek to portray the Naga identity, unity and territory as innate and natural. Yet these are not at all self-evident as the Nagamese tribal identity and its territorial manifestation beyond the Indian-Burmese border continuously has to be re-imagined to maintain its mobilizing power. In this paper, we will look into the narratives surrounding Nagamese identity and unity, its history and the role the borderland is playing in the re-imagining of the Naga irredentist nation. We will demonstrate how these tactics of re-envisioning the Nagamese unity and identity beyond international borders bring up fundamental contradictions inherent to India's project of 'unity in diversity'. Moreover, this case forces us to reconsider the nature of borderlands in relation to seemingly territorial coherent states, like India.

Kristof Titeca

The continuity of war and peace in the Ugandan-Congolese borderlands: the FAPC and cross-border contraband trade.

From 2003 to 2005, the rebel movement 'Forces Armées du People Congolais' (FAPC) was in power in the territories of Aru/Ariwara, Congo, bordering Uganda. Its main source of income was its control over the trading routes in the Ugandan-Congolese borderlands. However, it did not control this trade on its own: a cross-border 'regulatory authority' came into play which consisted of the rebel actors, Ugandan and Congolese traders and Ugandan state officials. The paper will show how this regulatory authority firmly entrenched itself in the area and had a profound impact on the post-conflict situation: on the one hand, the Congolese authorities have serious difficulties in implementing their rules, particularly with regard to taxation: a variety of actors therefore prefer the functionality of the 'war economy' to the actions of the state, which are perceived to be largely dysfunctional. This provokes continuous negotiations between different actors, which leads to a situation which can be described as 'no war, no peace' governance: the policy rules, particularly with regard to taxation, have to be seen as a compromise between the 'old' (FAPC-based) rules and regulations and the 'new', state-based rules and regulations. On the other hand, there is also a large degree of continuity in the cross-border contraband trade, which continues to be regulated and instrumentalised by the same actors. The distinction between a 'war economy' and 'peace economy' is therefore rather blurred: the 'peace economy' relies to a large extent on structures which were established during the war, and remains protected by major (governmental) players of this war economy - to use Andreas' (2004: 31) words "War problems have consequently turned into crime problems."

Military entrepreneurialism in the Ugandan-Congolese borderland

Sandrine Perrot and Koen Vlassenroot

Early August 1998, Ugandan troops re-entered the Democratic Republic of Congo, as part of a joint strategy with Rwanda to oust the Congolese President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. Even if in May 2003 these troops officially left the DRC, Ugandan politico-military and commercial networks, including Ugandan politico-military leaderships, Ugandan and Congolese business people and Congolese rebel leaders, would continue to play a dominant role in the northeastern parts of the DRC. This paper wants to illustrate how military intervention and these networks have shaped and reshaped existing patterns of transborder economic exchange and political processes. In most explanations of Uganda's military involvement in the DR Congo conflict, these networks have taken central stage but have hardly been defined. In most accounts, these are considered as predatory forces and socially destructive forms of organisation, undermining political stability, the functioning of state institutions and economic efficiency in Uganda. This paper will argue that the informal political structures and networks linking Uganda's political centre to Congo's war complex can also be important tools for regime consolidation. Even if it can be argued that the military intervention caused a political crisis at the end of Uganda's intervention, that it meant a loss of formal economic revenues and, as the different military confrontations between Ugandan and Rwandan troops in Kisangani reveal, that the state proved to have limited control over the military, on the longer term state authority was hardly affected. To comprehend this seeming paradox, it is crucial to get a better understanding of the particular links between the shadow networks of politico-military and economic control that became visible during the intervention, and the Ugandan regime. This paper therefore wants to contextualise these networks from a historical perspective and to evaluate their embedment in localised and transborder networks.

State-making from the Margins? A Comparative History of an Afghan and Congolese Borderland

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Drawing upon long term field work by the authors on the Afghani-Pakistani and DRC-Uganda borders, this paper uses comparative political ethnography to examine the processes through which borderlanders survive, accumulate and redistribute wealth, and regulate their political spaces in the context of protracted violent conflict. Starting from this bottom-up perspective, it argues that borderlands, far from being peripheral, may shape broader processes of economic transformation and open up new political spaces and inter-dependencies between 'centre' and 'periphery'. It is argued, first that in war time, borderlands may become sites of economic innovation and transformation leading to new economic equilibria. These transborder economies are not purely survivalist or predatory; they forge complex linkages between the local, regional and global levels and over the long term may have significant developmental effects. Second, new political spaces and novel patterns of interaction may develop between the state and the non state. Rather than seeing statebuilding as the steady diffusion of power outwards, new modes of governance may emerge from the borderland that eventually make the centre to what it is. The paper concludes by proposing a new perspective of state-making from the margins.