Re-Visiting Territoriality: Comparing the Histories of the Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe Lines

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MISHRA ATUL HARI

International Politics Division
Centre for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament
School of International Studies
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
New Delhi 110067
2007

Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament

Date 04/12/07

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Re-Visiting Territoriality: Comparing the Histories of the Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe Lines**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

MISHRA ATUL HARI

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Professor C.S.R. Murthy
Chairperson, CIPOD

Dr Siddharth Mallavarapu
Supervisor

Chairperson
Centre for International Politics,
Organization & Disarmament
School of International Studies
J.N.U., New Delhi

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Our existence in space and time is a dynamic process. Space, seen in geographical-territorial terms, and time, seen in the sense of living history of human beings, help specify the context of any given discussion. Moreover, space and time, interpreted as geography and history, offer much fertile grounds for geo-historical enquiries. Modern international relations scholarship, primarily woven around interactions between states, is one such canvass. It is interesting, however, that though states figure prominently in most accounts of international relations, the elements states are configured around do not get the attention they deserve. When we claim this, we are alluding, in other words, to the relative lack of theoretical attention paid to territory, that basic and necessary condition of statehood. Though a state's space and its territory are often understood to imply similar, if not same obtaining conditions, there exists a difference between the two. Space is transformed into territory through a process. These are organising strategies that social collectives like states undertake with particular intent to accord identity to space and thus define and delimit it within certain conditions.

Such organising strategies, which transform space into territory, also facilitate what is called territoriality. Territoriality, then, can be usefully understood as political organisation of (geographical) space. Since territoriality in the modern world is associated most with states (see, for example, Vasquez 1995), it remains on the margins of scholarly attention, just like state territory itself. Indeed, as Forsberg (1996) writes, "although territoriality is often mentioned as a defining element of the international system it is usually just mentioned, not theorized" (356). Or, to quote 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). Since territory, by definition, is a bounded space, boundaries (or frontiers and borders) act as its defining limits. Boundaries, in the modern state-system, are symbols of political, physical and legal limits of a state. Territoriality is intimately connected with boundaries. Boundaries identify the contours of state territoriality, and, simultaneously, impact the nature of this territoriality by interacting with it. As Caporaso

(2000), discussing the utility of territoriality as a concept puts it, "territoriality is used to remind us that states have borders that serve to physically protect from outside threats, to enhance a range of economic objectives, and to preserve cultural autonomy" (7). These functions indicate that the relationship between boundaries and territoriality is dynamic and it transforms as the organising strategies of states change.

At a very basic level, this research is driven by the need to understand more comprehensively the impact of boundaries on territoriality, and by extension, on state-formation in South Asia. It does so by focusing upon the three contentious boundaries drawn during the 19th and 20th centuries when the region was under imperial subordination. Given the sheer scope and intensity of politics involved with the Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe Lines, almost every aspect of these boundaries has been chronicled, researched and theorised. Despite the diversity of perspectives offered, however, little that explores the nature of South Asian territoriality by enquiring into the historical process through which the three boundaries came into being has been attempted. True, neither territoriality nor the process of state-formation exhibit definite trajectories. Indeed, territoriality is a complex concept and state-formation is a complex process. But these complexities can be specified by configuring them in relation with the histories of the construction the three boundaries. This is done by comparing the histories of the making of the Durand, McMahon and the Radcliffe Lines and identifying broad convergences and divergences they exhibit. These convergences and divergences are then understood in the context of the processes and outcomes of the three histories, which, in turn, lead us to some understanding on territoriality and state-formation in the region.

Having outlined what this research hopes to achieve, it is necessary that a few other questions may be addressed. A more justified question one may ask is: why choose territoriality? Or even, why choose territoriality in South Asia? A plausible and comprehensive way of answering these questions could be to offer contexts and perspectives to what we propose to research. Boundaries across the world have been sources of conflict and confrontation. Exceptions among them occur rarely. But some boundaries have been more disputed than others, some have been more violent than

others, and some have been more arbitrary than others. This relative situation of boundaries' varying dispute-potential is attributed to imperial boundaries imposed upon polities of the colonised regions of the world. Imperialism was, among other things, a mandate for ensuring 'progress' of 'primitive' and 'backward' political societies and civilisations. One of the ways this was achieved in various parts of the world was by converting territorial polities with fuzzy frontiers into modern nation-states with linear boundaries. South Asia was no exception to this process. The modernising urge of imperialism went hand-in-hand with imperial rivalries, and often boundaries were drawn to set the domains of imperial rivals separate. South Asia, which saw this in the form of the so-called Great Game, has been no exception to this process either. Together, imperialism's civilising urge and imperial rivalries set in motion peculiar strategies of organising the space of the subcontinent whose culmination, in phases, were the three boundaries we propose to study. Indeed, so important was the concern with frontiers and boundaries for the British Government in India, that Embree (1989) 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" (70).

It is no one's contention that the three boundaries have not been extensively historicised and studied. What does appear to be missing is their comparative analysis in a single study with the purpose of gaining theoretical and conceptual insights into territoriality. This is the task the present study sets for itself. A related question needs to be addressed here. How does comparing the histories of boundaries help understand import of territoriality? Baud and van Schendel's "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands" (1997) offers some leads into research of this nature. Their work suggests that a retrospective analysis of historical events help understands the underlying processes more usefully. This is to say that since boundaries in the region succeeded territorial conquests, and indeed, represent the culmination of the process of constructing modern nation-states, re-visiting them may offer new perspectives on territoriality. As the two historians point out,

> the historical analysis of borders is especially important in the case of the modern states in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. In this period, borders all over the world became crucial elements in a new, increasingly global system of states (1997: 214).

The general scarcity of scholarship on territoriality and the process of state-formation in international relations is made acute by the fact that such studies of South Asia have been relatively fewer when compared with other regions of the world, like Africa or Europe. 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 galvanised local assertion after the first Partition 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 then, territory has been the most important referent in their subsequent interactions. Since decolonisation was so inextricably linked with territorial anxieties (over its loss 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. Every time a crisis has precipitated on these products of Partition, territory and upholding the integrity of territorial boundaries have been invoked as its reasons. Therefore, it becomes important to engage with territoriality in this region. Read thus, space (or territory) was energised by application of varying strategies of imagining and organising space. Not all succeeded, of course. But those that did, and did not, offer much to be studied. A related reason also needs to be mentioned. Recent writings on geopolitics have offered an innovative way of thinking and imagining about territory and territoriality. Critical Geopolitics, as it is called, has laced research students with important theoretical insights to re-visit some high moments of modern geopolitics, to glean from them not just more evident outcomes, but also interpret and establish latent, discursive aspects of geopolitics. This research aims precisely at this task.

Having outlined what we propose to study in the following pages and also having offered a sketch of the reasons for such a study, we must briefly present a glimpse of how we proceed. Chronology is important in some ways, and so we adhere to it in sequencing chapters 2, 3 and 4. These three chapters aim at presenting territorial histories of the making of the three boundaries. Chapter 2 deals with the Durand Line, negotiated in 1893, as it was the first of the three boundaries we study. The thrust of this chapter is the Great Game imperial rivalry between Russia and Britain during the 19th century which, in the last quarter of that century, made the creation of Afghanistan's boundaries almost inevitable. In the main, the history is largely events centric and borrows from some of the more recognised old and recent accounts of Afghanistan. Chief among these are the works of Fraser-Tytler (1962), Misdaq (2006), Roberts (2003), Ewans (2001), Lamb (1968), Sykes (1981), and Dupree (1973).

From here our attention shifts to the McMahon Line boundary which became one of the causes of war between India and China in 1962. The boundary was clinched by Henry McMahon, the foreign secretary of the colonial government, in a display of shrewd diplomacy at the Simla Conference in 1913-14. Chapter 2 avoids chronology and is more inclined towards processes. It outlines British efforts to make inroads into Tibet, highlights in some detail Curzon's geopolitics and its influence on the subsequent events which lead to the Simla Conference and its outcome. There is no dearth of scholarship on the McMahon Line, and this chapter relies upon some of the most acknowledged ones, including Maxwell (1971), Mehra (1972), Gupta (1971), Singh (1988), Hoffman (1990), Lamb (1966) and Woodman (1969). This chapter also discusses some of the events and processes related to the McMahon boundary in the final years of colonial rule in India as well as those that led to the war of 1962. The Radcliffe Lines were the last of the colonial boundaries drawn. We trace their roots and outline the trends towards their outcome in chapter 4. The narrative of this chapter is woven around the politics of the British Government in India, the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League. But it also highlights communal aspects of pre-Partition politics and their crucial roles in hastening the events of 1947. The actual process of arriving at the Radcliffe boundaries

and its nuances are also given attention. It relies on the abundantly available literature but gleans from it only relevant aspects for the narrative.

In chapter 5, we begin by comparing the territorial histories of the three previous chapters. From events we draw out processes. We connect processes with outcomes. We discuss convergences and divergences of their comparison and outline some leads that could be explored. We also discuss in some detail conceptual and theoretical literature on territoriality and boundaries as well as contributions of Critical Geopolitics. In the final part we discuss some of the practical and discursive dimensions of territoriality that our comparison tentatively offers. In the final chapter, we conclude by taking stock of the trajectory of this research, some of its suggestions and possible leads into further research.

Chapter 2: The Making of the Durand Line

We begin our territorial histories by engaging with a country with which everything that could go wrong has gone wrong with repetitive consistency. Arguably, few other states in the world across history would have suffered so much on account of their geographical location. Afghanistan has been for long the playfield, and at the wrong end, of great power geopolitics. In this chapter we attempt to understand the nature of imperial geopolitics by focusing upon the politics of the construction of its boundaries. The discussion unfolds in three parts. In the first, we outline a brief political history of 18th and 19th centuries Afghanistan configured around the rulers and rivalries that marked the country during this period. We then pick up the threads of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central and South Asia to converge it on the making of Afghanistan's different territorial boundaries. Here we highlight in particular the impulses of what have been called the Forward and Stationary schools of frontier policies. Taking advantage of the historical background of the previous two interventions, the third part captures the events that led to the creation of the Durand Line. We conclude by tracing, very briefly, the genesis of the Pushtunistan issue that is at the heart of the continuing boundary dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Rulers and Rivalries – 1747 to 1901

Stories have to begin somewhere. A mention of the nature of, and events related to, the formation of the Afghan state prior to the turbulence of the 19th century must make for a reasonable beginning. The physical contours of Afghanistan had traditionally waxed and waned given its location. Throughout history Afghanistan fell at the crossroads of cultural, economic and political interfaces among civilisations. Much of Afghan identity, to the extent there could have been, developed under this influence. Between 16th and early 18th centuries Afghanistan remained a three-way pivot between the Mughals of India, the Safavids of Persia and the Uzbeks of Turkestan. Conflicts over Afghan territory were configured around Badakhshan (Uzbeks against Mongols), Herat (Persian control) and Qandahar (disputed between the Persians and the Mughals) (Jenkins 1986: 173). There exists a general agreement among historians of Afghanistan that as a politico-

territorial entity the country came into being during the reign of Ahmed Shah Abdali (later Durrani). An Abdali Pusthun, Ahmed Shah was in the service of the Safavid usurper Nadir Shah, who spearheaded the rout of the Mughals at Panipat and the infamous sack of Delhi in 1739. Ahmed Shah assumed power after Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747. In October that year the Abdali tribal confederation or the *loya jirga* gathered to choose Ahmed Shah not the 'King of Afghanistan', but the 'Shah of Afghans'[1] (Rubin 1988: 1191). The ruler was a leader of the people, and not necessarily the sovereign of the territory of the newly-formed state. The centre of this Afghan state was Qandahar. Ahmed Shah severed ties with Persia and established an independent kingdom whose boundaries, at the height of his reign, stretched from rivers Oxus in north to Indus in south, from Kashmir in the east to Khorasan in the west (Roberts 2003: 2). A more favourable account puts this as stretching from "the Oxus River in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south, the Ganges in the east to Khorasan in the west" (Misdaq 2006: 49). In any case, Afghan territory during this period did exist up to Indus and Oxus rivers, the two limits relevant for present discussion. Given the absence of a 'competitive state-system' in the region to define boundaries or determine sovereignty, the Afghan state of this period has been variously described as a 'traditional state' (following Anthony Giddens' typology) (Rubin 1988), 'patrimonial' and 'segmentary' state (Misdaq 2006) and even a 'virtual antithesis of nation-states' (Rubin 1988).

The territorial consolidation and a measure of political stability brought about by Ahmed Shah dissolved due to agnatic rivalries within few decades of his death in 1773. He was succeeded by his son Timur Shah who ruled for two decades. As the intra-clan rivalries intensified among the Abdalis, or Durranis, territorial fragmentation ensued. This continued throughout the reigns of Zaman Shah (1793-1800), Mahmud (1800-03), Shah Shuja (1803-09) and Mahmud again (1809-1818). Thus, "with the collapse of the dynasty of Ahmad Shah, Afghan nationhood came very nearly to an end" (Fletcher 1965: 70). By 1818 Afghanistan had fragmented once again into a trisected state. Dost

[1] To put in some perspective, this was 10 years before the decisive battle of Plassey, 69 years before the American Declaration of Independence, 82 years before the French Revolution, 110 years before the Indian Revolt, 170 years before the Russian Revolution, 172 years before Afghanistan's formal independence and 200 years before the simultaneous Partition and independence of the subcontinent.

Mohammad, the most powerful of the three rulers, controlled Kabul and its hinterlands. His brother and ally seated in Qandahar while Herat became another corner of power. A civil war ensued among the warring Saddozai and Muhammadzai clans of the Durrani tribe between 1818 and 1835 during which time Dost Mohammad remained in control of Kabul alone. Dost Mohammad ruled in two phases, and his first phase coincided with the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842). The war, imposed by the British Government in India to put Shah Shuja of the rival clan in the seat of power, was a disaster for the British. Dost Mohammad had surrendered during the war and was pensioned off to India. The British reinstalled him after the war. During his second term, Dost Mohammad ruled from 1842 to 1863 and for most of this duration he successfully struggled to integrate the violent kingdom. Two weeks before his death in 1863, Herat, the last of the outlying provinces, was reunified with the central control at Kabul under his command. "Dost Mohammad's main achievement was to unify Afghanistan under his personal rule, but he achieved little else in the way of nation building" (Ewans 2001: 56). He maintained relations with Persia and the British, gained British assistance on account of his neutrality during the Revolt of 1857 and nurtured one of his sons Sher Ali for the throne. Sher Ali too ruled in two terms, (1863-1867 and 1869-1879). For a brief period, one of his half brothers, Mohammad Afzal, usurped the throne. Sher Ali's troubled reign culminated in the inauguration of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1879-1881). At the beginning of the war, he abdicated in the favour of his son Yakub Khan who was accepted by the British as the Amir of Afghanistan. It was in the very short reign of the new Amir that the Treaty of Gandamak was signed on May 26, 1879 with the British Government in India whereby Afghan finances and foreign relations were ceded to the British. Afghanistan would take another 40 years to break out of the constrictions of the Treaty. Yakub Khan's control over Afghan territories was nominal. In the turmoil of the war, he abdicated and was exiled to India, where he eventually died in 1923. He would, he is supposed to have said, "rather be a grass-cutter in the English camp than be the ruler of Afghanistan" (Ewans 2001: 64).

The bewildered British found an honourable escape in the unexpected resurfacing of Abdur Rehman Khan, a nephew of Amir Sher Ali, who had gone into exile in

Tashkent and Samarkand on Russian pension for 12 years after helping his uncle Mohammad Azam put his (Abdur Rehman's) father Mohammad Afzal briefly in power against Sher Ali. Though sent by the Russians Abdur Rehman proved to be a man of his own and soon brought Qandahar and Herat under his control granting the British a face-saving relief. If Dost Mohammad consolidated the Afghan territories, it was Abdur Rehman who made efforts to achieve Afghanistan's territorial limits. During his 21 year reign (1880-1901) Abdur Rehman, also known as the 'Iron Amir' for his absolutist rule, secured the frontiers of Afghanistan as they stand today by shrewd diplomacy, tactics and sometimes by sheer accident. Afghanistan's northern boundary with Russia, western boundary with Persia and southern-eastern boundary with British India – the Durand Line – were decided and almost demarcated under his tenure.

Discussions of 19th century Afghanistan overwhelmingly focus on territorial conflicts and the politics of territorial expansion and contraction of the Afghan state. It is useful to view the Afghan history of the 19th century as the history of the formation of a territorial state. Its domestic dimension relates to internal tussle for control of chief provinces like Herat, Qandahar, and Kabul etc. The external dimension of this political history, however, is more complicated. This is because during this period, Afghanistan also found itself sandwiched between Tsarist Russia from the north and its proxy in the west and the British Government in India from south and the east. There is no dearth of literature on the Russo-British rivalry in Central Asia during the 19th century. Britain was at the height of its imperial glory in the later part of the 19th century and comprised of a population at home that was, instinctively and by tuition, committed to the ideology of a civilising imperialism. Unsurprisingly, the Great Game, so called, has been chronicled in fine details and thick volumes. But this abundance need not detain the discussion. It is important to acknowledge that a political history of the making of Afghanistan's frontiers has to deal with the Russo-British rivalry. The following discussion attempts this task.

The Great Game Decides Afghan Boundaries

In his comprehensive discussion of the imperial frontier systems in Asia as it developed during the 19th century, Alastair Lamb (1968) lays down the principles of colonial boundary evolution thus: "As the colonial empires approached each other, there

developed a period of tension between them – accompanied by the prophesies of war – which was followed by a period of negotiations and boundary settlements" (61). The history of the making of Afghanistan's boundaries can be seen as an elaboration of this statement.

By the end of the 18th century, Asia had become an extended field of European major power rivalries. Most crucially, Central and South Asia became the regions where French, British and Russian imperial interests seemed to be headed towards a possible collision. Britain, being the most dominant imperial power in the region, became anxious over the fears of possible French and later Russian advance towards India from the north-west. Its fear of the French over India began with Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt in 1798 (Roberts 2003: 3). The same year the Marquess Wellesley became India's governor general. On his pen this perceived threat became the "chief justification for the destruction of the Indian enemies of British rule, notably Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the Marathas" (Yapp 1987: 648). British anxiety deepened after the Franco-Russian Treaty of Tilsit (1807) which ended the war between Tsar Alexander's Russia and Napoleon's French empire and launched an alliance between the two, apparently against the British. Under the Treaty Russia was forced to declare war on England. It lasted five years though no actual hostilities occurred (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1948: 41-52). The importance accorded to the Treaty by the historians of Russo-British rivalry is trifle inexplicable given that Franco-Russian relations had historically been unstable and that, notwithstanding the Russian aristocracy's preference for the French language, within five years of Tilsit, Napoleon invaded Russia with what was till then the largest army ever assembled in Europe. In any case, the spectre of an impeding French invasion had decidedly passed by the first decade of the 19th century. It was now a two-cornered tale of Russian advance through Central Asia, possibly towards the warm waters of the Arabian Sea, and British India's efforts to contain Russia at a safe distance. In fact, Russia had inaugurated the 19th century by a planned march towards India, ordered by Tsar Paul I, son of Catherine the Great, in 1801. But the Tsar was assassinated and the Don Cossacks turned back on hearing the news (Roberts 2003: 3). At their closest, the Russian troops were at least 1000 miles from the Khyber Pass.

Though this was the first and only stated attempt of Russia on British territory in India, it was preceded by a history of territorial expansion and was to be succeeded by further attempts that brought it at the frontiers of Afghanistan. To put it very briefly, it took Russia 300 years of territorial expansion to reach the gates of Afghanistan by the latter half of the 19th century. Historians of empire treat Russia as an exception because it displayed the characteristics of both, the 'modern' empires like Britain and France and also of 'moribund' empires like the Ottoman (see Lieven (1999: 163-200). This dual characteristic of imperial Russia explains its territorial expansion in Central Asia which began in the 17th century. By the end of the 16th century, Russia had reasserted itself after centuries of attacks by the Mongols and the Turks to spread over the Urals in search of secure frontiers and trade with the Orient (Lamb 1968: 59). Its eastward expansion met Chinese territorial power by the middle of the 17th century. Though history is witness to a failed expedition to Khiva as early as the 1720s, Russia's southward thrusts came in two phases during the 19th century which led to the formation of a Russo-Afghan frontier. This history will be discussed below. But before that, it is necessary to telegraphically capsule the making of the Indo-Afghan frontier.

It matters little how far back in history one traces the efforts of the British to consolidate their territorial hold over the subcontinent. Whenever it really began – either 1700 or even earlier – the rapidity of the East India Company's territorial expansion after 1757 can not be disputed. Beginning with southern India, the Company made a foray eastward and, after systematic subjugation or outright territorial occupation, brought most of the mainland subcontinent under its control. Britain's search for secure frontiers for its Indian colony led it to the Burmese swamps of the east and the Himalayas in the north. For a maritime empire with the world's strongest navy the south was a lucrative trade arena. The problem lay with its north-western front. The infamous Khyber and Bolan passes had historically served as facilitators of repeated invasions of the subcontinent. As we have earlier seen, these had continued through the 18th century even as the British moved north and the east. The Afghan ruler Zaman Shah's incursions across the frontier, beginning 1795, to reclaim Ahmed Shah's possessions had alarmed the British. This despite the fact that the Sikhs were in control of the region and also that Zaman Shah could never advance beyond Lahore (Bilgrami 1972: 14-15). To add to this,

apprehensions of a French invasion of India via Persia and Afghanistan were rife. British anxieties, first over Zaman Shah, then the French and finally the Russians meant that the Afghan frontier beyond the Indus, the customary invasion route to northern India, could not be long ignored. During the First Anglo-Afghan War, the British played through the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh. Within half a century, and 10 years after his death, British India had come in direct contact with hedgy frontier Afghan territories. Forty-four years later, this Indo-Afghan frontier was turned into the Durand Line boundary.

Securing frontiers seemed to be the chief occupation of all expanding empires in the age of empire. British response to the Russian expansion was not monolithic. Two distinct, even opposite, schools of frontier policy emerged in London and in India with the aim of keeping Russia as far away as possible from the northern plains. These were the Forward policy school and the Stationary or Moderate policy school. The former was associated with the Westminster Conservatives, and the latter with the Liberals. The Forward school "wished to see Britain advance to meet the Russian threat directly and as far away from the plains as possible"; the Stationary school, on the other hand, held the view that "the limits of the British power should be set where they could more easily be supported, and proposed that the aim of keeping Russia back could be best served by interposing a third power between the lion and the bear" (Maxwell 1971: 21). This is not a neat differentiation, though. Many, like Hopkirk (1990), Jenkins (1986) and Morgan (1981) argue that the buffer state solution was a Forwardist plan. In any case, it is clear that the nature of British response depended upon the hue of the government in London. But crucially, it was also influenced by the differences existing between Foreign Office and the Cabinet in London and the British Indian government in Calcutta.

The Forwardist solution to the Russian menace was to carve out what they called a 'scientific frontier'. This scientific frontier was to be a convergence of natural and strategic boundaries. Claims differ over who devised the concept but its first manifestations can be traced back to Lord Wellesley, who, according to Dalrymple (2007) was also the progenitor of the Forward school in India. In the coming years the concept was put to action by Lord Lytton, the viceroy of India and his commander

General Frederick Roberts, the infamous hero of the Second Afghan war, in 1877 (Johnson 2003: 710). Lord Curzon, the most famous of the British Russophobes, defined it thus: it is "a Frontier which unites natural and strategic strength, and by placing both the entrance and exits of the passes in the hands of the defending Power, compels the enemy to conquer the approach before he can use the passage" (quoted in Jenkins 1986: 178). The most obvious choice for such a frontier seemed the traditional Hindu Kush barrier in the heart of Afghanistan. As it turned out, the boundaries of Afghanistan were shaped during the Forwardist pursuit of this scientific frontier. And in the process Afghanistan was to emerge as a buffer state.

The first British move towards an alliance with Afghanistan was the "Treaty of Friendship between the British Government and the King of Cabool (Kabul)" signed on June 17, 1809 (Jenkins 1986: 174). However, since this treaty was oriented towards containing the French threat, it became obsolete with the threat itself. In the 1820s Russia waged successful wars against the Persians and the Ottoman empire causing some alarm in London. But since the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh were in direct control of frontier regions with Afghanistan – he captured the Afghan winter capital of Peshawar in 1823 and later added Balochistan to his dominion – the danger was not yet considered imminent. This began to change with the publications of Colonel de Lacy Evans' *Designs of Russia* in 1828 and *Probability of an Invasion of British India* in 1829, "the purport of the second being that there existed a danger of a direct Russian invasion of India through Turkestan" (Yapp 1987: 648). "Though such notions", notes Roberts, "defied logistical reasons, Evans's well-received works convinced more British officials of the necessity to take action to forestall Russian expansion" (2003: 4). In July 1830, Sir John Malcolm, a veteran of Anglo-Persian diplomacy, also cautioned his government about the Russian threat. Concerned over its Indian possessions, London responded by enhancing the autonomy of the Indian government. "The Indian Government was authorized to act as an Asian power" and could take all measures short of a direct war with Russia without London's permission (Bilgrami 1972: 67-68). Around this time, the British frontiers were at the river Sutlej while the Russian end lay in the Khirgis steppes, somewhere

between the Caspian and the Aral seas. Between the two lay 14000 miles of inhospitable steppes, desert and rugged mountains (Bilgrami 1972: 131)..

Lord Auckland became British India's 10th governor general in March 1836. He arrived fully briefed regarding the affairs of Central Asia. Since his predecessor William Bentinck had supported Shah Shuja's abortive invasion of Afghanistan, the relations between Dost Mohammad and Calcutta had become cool. Dost Mohammad wanted Peshawar back from Ranjit Singh, with whom the British had good relations. He addressed a letter of congratulations to Auckland, expressed his unhappiness over the Sikh-Afghan Peshawar issue asking for British aid in settling it, and added: "I hope your Lordship will consider me and my country as your own" (Bilgrami 1972: 75). It seems Auckland believed Dost Mohammad. Three years later he would give away Afghanistan to Shah Shuja.

Russia was, meanwhile, encouraging Persia to launch a siege of Herat, that 'granary of Central Asia'. For the proponents of Forward policy, the importance of Herat for defence of India was never in doubt. Having suffered territorial losses in Central Asia to Russia, Persia sought compensation at the expense of the Afghan province. Sensing the danger, Auckland sent a British mission to Dost Mohammad with Captain Alexander Burnes in charge in 1837. Though ostensibly a mission to secure economic and trade opportunities, its aim was purely political. Dost Mohammad requested of Burnes that the British Government in India view his claims over Peshawar with favour and said that he wanted peaceful solution of the issue. Burnes' report offered a positive account of Dost Mohammad, but for Auckland and his advisors the mission had been a failure. Burnes was reprimanded for breaching his brief, though this was not the case. Disappointed by the British, Dost Mohammad turned to Persia and Russia. During the early months of 1838, amidst the continuing Persian siege of Herat, Auckland became convinced that Dost Mohammad had rejected his offers of good offices with the Sikhs and had sold out to the Russians and the Persians (Ewans 2001: 42). He sought an active British policy towards Afghanistan and decided to restore Shah Shuja. Towards that goal, a Tripartite Treaty was signed between Ranjit Singh, Shah Shuja and the British in July, whereby the

Sikh army was to march into Afghanistan to enthrone Shah Shuja with British aid while Shah Shuja would relinquish Afghan claims over Peshawar. But suspicious that a Sikh victory would embolden Ranjit Singh and threaten British interests in the northern plains, it was decided to commit British troops for the venture. Ewans (2001) notes that the reason for committing British troops had been the overall transformation of British policy towards Afghanistan: from a dependence on Sikh alliance, it was now about extending direct British influence into Afghanistan and "establishing it as a fully-fledged buffer state" (43). Perhaps this change of policy explains why the British persisted with the venture even after the Persian withdrawal of Herat siege. The 20000-strong 'Army of Indus', overly confident of a comfortable campaign, set out on its invasion in December 1838. As for official justification, Auckland widely circulated the Simla Manifesto, a "patently dishonest piece of propaganda" – released after the Herat siege was raised – that painted Dost Mohammad as a traitor and a conspirator whose ambition was "injurious to the security and peace of the frontiers of India". London too nodded the venture with some stipulations. By the time London's official dispatch was received, the army was on its way.

The First Anglo-Afghan War was a disaster for British. Shah Shuja was enthroned, but soon killed. Captain (now Sir) Burnes and his brother were murdered. Dost Mohammad's son Mohammad Akbar killed William Macnaghten, one of the architects and the chief political advisor of the campaign. (His headless and mutilated body was displayed at the entrance of Kabul bazaar. Such scenes would be repeated in Afghanistan a little over 150 years later with nauseating consistency.) The Army of Indus could not survive the Afghan wrath. The only immediate survivor of 'Auckland's Folly' was a certain Dr Barden, although some survivors turned up in the coming years when the British sent the Army of Retribution to salvage some pride and men. They allowed the exiled Dost Mohammad to return on the throne of Kabul. Auckland soon resigned. The Forward policy had lead to a disaster and consequently the moderates gained in London and in India. In the view of Percy Sykes, the war "undoubtedly led to the Indian Mutiny" (1981: 59). It almost certainly did not have a causal impact on the events of 1857, but its psychological import cannot be overlooked (Bilgrami 1972: 109-110).

Certainly though, the war decidedly set in motion the process of making Afghanistan a buffer state.

Domestic situation in India had been volatile when the British went to war. The debacle had cost them dearly in financial terms. With the change of government in London, Lord Ellenborough assumed the highest Indian office in 1842, and in October that year, announced the withdrawal of all British troops from Afghanistan. The reinstated Dost Mohammad invested himself in the reunification of his fragmented country which he managed to achieve by 1863, the year he died. Though slow, Russian march through the khanates continued. In 1847 it had come to occupy the mouth of Syr Darya (Sykes 1981: 85). Since Ranjit Singh's death, the British were constantly eyeing the dissolution of the kingdom and the territory between Indus and the Afghan frontier. That eventually happened in February 1849 when the British won the battle of Gujarat against the Sikh army. Despite the lure, Dost Mohammad resisted from taking Peshawar. The decade following 1842 saw relations between Afghanistan and Britain exist in a state of suspended animation with both involved in internal politics. The 1850s again saw increased Russo-Persian activity aimed at Herat. This, coupled with the new reality of the Indo-Afghan frontier, compelled that contacts be resumed. Till then, the British policy of non-interference involved a tactical wait for a *de facto* ruler of Afghanistan to emerge (Abrol 1974: 9). By mid-1850s Dost Mohammad seemed strong enough for the British to enter into a Treaty whereby the Afghan ruler and the British agreed to have same friends and enemies. In 1856, Persia once again attacked Herat and the British coercion through the Persian Gulf ensured its withdrawal. By a treaty signed in 1857, the Persian-Afghan border was settled (Saikal 2006: 131). In early 1857, another treaty, reaffirming the one signed two years ago was signed. The Indian Revolt followed soon and Dost Mohammad was rewarded for his neutrality during a period when, had he decided to invade the Punjab, averred one senior British official, no "part of the country north of Bengal could have been saved" (Ewans 2001: 54). For a decade thereon, the British followed what has been called the policy of 'masterly inactivity' pronounced chiefly by Lord John Lawrence, first the commissioner of the Punjab and later the viceroy of India. It was Lawrence who, during the Revolt, had suggested returning Peshawar to Dost Mohammad

on account of his services and financial constraints facing the government. The adherents of this policy believed that Russian invasion of India was unlikely given the logistical and strategic difficulties it would encounter. They also believed that London and St. Petersburg were perfectly capable of resolving the Afghan Question through diplomacy (Abrol 1974; Fraser-Tytler 1962). And they feared that a "second Mutiny would result from irresponsibly committing Indian Native Armies to supporting trans-frontier operations and diplomacy and becoming embroiled in the profitless abyss of Afghan insurrection" (Preston 1969: 59). Successive viceroys, Mayo and Northbrook, faithfully adhered to the policy till, in 1874, the Liberal government of Gladstone was replaced by Disraeli's Conservatives and the expected resignation of Northbrook and his replacement by Lord Lytton, a confirmed Forwardist. Lytton's aggressive policies towards Afghanistan led British India into its second war with Afghanistan. It can be said that this time the outcome was less drastic for the British. But like 40 years ago, the consequences for Afghanistan were far-reaching. The Second Anglo-Afghan war was also a consequence of British apprehensions of Russia's continuing expansion. More importantly for present concern, this was also the phase when Afghanistan's boundaries were finally settled.

"Ever since the conquest of Sind under Dalhousie and the Persian War of 1857, it has (sic) been a moot question with British statesman and military experts as to what would be the most scientific frontier on the north-west" (Abrol 1974: 13). The Queen's Proclamation had disavowed all desires of any further extension of territory. Thus, the moderates of masterly inactivity were content with the plains of Indus acting as India's frontier. Meanwhile, Russia had entered its second phase of territorial expansion in Central Asia that was to last till the end of the century (Lamb 1968: 60). Fresh from the defeat in the Crimean War, Russia had realised the significance of Central Asia in gaining an upper hand in European diplomacy with Britain (MacKenzie 1974: 167-188). Indeed, as the Russian General M. D. Skobelev, the expansionist who butchered 20000 Turkomans in Geok Teppe in 1881, put it: "The more powerful Russia becomes in Central Asia, the weaker England becomes in India, and consequently more amenable in Europe" (quoted in Sykes 1981: 83). The pace of Russia's annexations was formidable;

the khanates collapsed much like the fabled dominoes of the cold war during the 1960s and 70s. Picking up from 1847, it came up the Syr Darya to take up Taskent in 1865, forced Bokhara to accept its suzerainty the next year, creating Turkistan province in 1867. Samarkand fell in the spring of 1868. Khiva followed in July 1873. Khokand in 1875. It would have been unnatural of another empire not to get alarmed.

While in India viceroys sworn to masterly inactivity maintained their poise and position, the imperative of direct diplomacy with St. Petersburg dawned upon London. This was all the more important because there existed a clear chasm between the professions emerging out of St. Petersburg and the actions of its frontiersmen pacing towards Afghanistan's north and north-western borders. Russia could manage, afford and benefit from this doublespeak because of the emergence of two able and competent men at the helm of its political and military affairs. Prince Gorchakov was appointed the imperial chancellor in 1863. General K. P. von Kaufman was made Turkestan's governor general in 1867. Historians of diplomacy put Bismarck and Gorchakov on the same pedestal. It is not difficult to see why. By a dispatch of 1864, Gorchakov had outlined to the world the rationale and extent of Russia's Central Asian expansion and set Syr Darya and the Issyk Kul lake in the khanates as its limit. (Misdaq 2006: 68). He had assured the British that Khiva would not be annexed as late as January 1873 (Sykes 1981: 87). Such was the tradition of 19th century *machtpolitik.*

London opened negotiations with the veteran Russian ambassador von Brunnow in 1869, and Clarendon, the British secretary of state for foreign affairs, suggested to him the "recognition of some territory as neutral between the possessions of England and Russia which should be the limit of those possessions and be scrupulously respected by both powers" (quoted in Bilgrami 1972: 150). The reference was obviously to Afghanistan. The Khivan campaign surprised both Brunnow and the Gladstone government and with it "stiffened India's determination not to let Afghanistan become a part of any neutral territory" (Morgan 1981: 170). The negotiations lasted four years and produced the Granville-Gorkhakov agreement of 1873 whereby Russia declared Afghanistan beyond its sphere of influence. Most importantly, the agreement apparently

secured the first of modern Afghanistan's northern boundaries. This boundary was generally agreed to be along the course of the river Oxus or Amu Darya even as it was not immediately delimited. Additionally, Russia conceded Badakhshan and Wakhan as Afghan territories. Though it must be noted that historians disagree on this. Bilgrami (1972) argues that Gorchakov expressed reservations over these concessions, while historians sympathetic to British (Sykes 1981; Fraser-Tytler 1962) maintain that Russia conceded. As we discuss boundaries and territorial politics, mention must be made of the territorial dispute over Seistan between Afghanistan and Persia which began with a Persian aggression in 1869 and resulted in an arbitration awarded by the British through the Seistan Boundary Award in 1873. Both parties temporarily accepted the award but bickering continued for the next century, when they were joined by Balochi claimants. The rest of Afghanistan's northern, eastern boundaries and also the Durand Line were demarcated after the final Russo-Afghan crisis of the 19th century. To reach that point in the history, we must negotiate with the second surge of Forward policy, which led to the Second Anglo-Afghan war and its consequences for Afghan territoriality.

In 1874, the Liberal government of Gladstone was replaced by Disraeli's Conservatives. Henry Rawlinson, the veteran of first Afghan war, had been protesting against the Afghan estrangement caused by masterly inactivity in India. His *England and Russia in the East* (1874), which argued that the Russian's march would inevitably lead them to Herat, served the same purpose that de Lacy Evans' books had done in the 1820s. Rawlinson was proposing a new Forward policy and Disraeli took cognisance. Lord Northbrook resigned in 1876 and Lord Lytton became the new viceroy.[2] He soon prevailed upon Indian strategists to decidedly undo the policy of non-interference in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Sher Ali had continued to express his anxiety at Russian expansion to the British. General Kaufmann had also begun correspondence with the Amir which the latter turned over to the British. Lytton's goal towards Afghanistan remains unclear, if indeed there was any. On his arrival, he informed Sher Ali of his appointment and asked him to receive a British envoy at his court. The Amir

[2] Ironically, Lytton was the son of Edward Bulwer-Lytton, the famous novelist and poet who wrote: "Beneath the rule of men entirely great/ The pen is mightier than the sword". Morgan suggests that Lytton was keen live down his poetic inheritance.

congratulated the viceroy and politely refused his offer expressing fears of the envoy's safety adding that any such move would compel him to accept a Russian envoy which would only enrage his people. Two years of cold and civil correspondence passed in the subcontinent when in Europe the Congress of Berlin was occasioned after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877. To gain advantage at the Congress, Russia decided to send a mission to Kabul, breaching the agreement of 1873. Lytton once again demanded a diplomatic representation in Kabul warning that a rejection would bring military action. An animated Sher Ali apparently signed a secret agreement with the Russians who promised assistance in the event of a foreign attack (Roberts 2003: 18). One more refusal and the existence of a secret agreement enraged Lytton, and in November 1878 came the declaration of war against Afghanistan. Weakened at Berlin, Russia reneged on its promise to Afghanistan. And thus it was that "the rulers of India were once more, after the lapse of forty years, obeying the deep-rooted impulse which was urging them forward to possess and control their natural frontiers" (Fraser-Tytler 1962: 138). It would be otiose to detail upon the events of the war. Relevant are some of the outcomes.

Sher Ali's abdication at the onset of the war had put his son Yakub Khan in power. The infirmities of his physical constitution vying with his political position, the British found a perfect man to impose the Treaty of Gandamak. As already noted, the Treaty bound Afghanistan to British with the latter in control of its finance and foreign policies, the Khyber and Kurram Passes, the adjoining frontier districts, and Balochistan. Indeed, "Gandamak was the most humiliating treaty ever signed by an Afghan ruler" (Roberts 2003: 18). Although the Treaty of Gandamak officially ended hostilities, actual peace remained elusive. In September that year the head of the British mission in Kabul was killed. In retribution General Frederick Roberts unleashed a massacre of sorts in the city. Volatility reigned Afghanistan once again. Disraeli had initially congratulated Lytton on having achieved the scientific frontier in the immediate aftermath of Gandamak (Ewans 2001: 63). Afghans had revolted by the end of the year and the prime minister in London was under increasing pressure to stop funding to the war and pull back the troops. Soon the government fell. Gladstone once again came to power and this heralded the end of the second, and perhaps equally disastrous, phase of Forward policy.

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Lytton soon resigned and was replaced by Ripon. Sometime either in the run up to the war or during its course, Lytton and the Forwardists had become convinced that for a truly scientific frontier of India – the Hindu Kush – Afghanistan would have to be territorially dismembered (Roberts 2003: 1-13; Fraser-Tytler 1962: 137-180; Sykes 1981: 110-119). The Afghan insurgency did much to strengthen his belief. Accordingly, he confirmed a local feudal lord the governor of Qandahar, offered Herat to Persia but the negotiations didn't progress, and no prospective ruler was in sight for either Kabul or the territory north of the Hindu Kush (Ewans 2001: 68). This was Lytton's perplexity which has been mentioned earlier. The arrival in early 1880 of Abdur Rehman Khan and the subsequent events in London perhaps coincided to prevent Afghanistan's territorial collapse.

Though they considered him the most Russian of all candidates to the throne of Kabul, Abdur Rehman was the only one the British could deal with. He was willing to accept the clauses of Gandamak but not a truncated state. So the British efforts reversed in a very short duration from one of fragmenting the country to that of saving its territorial integrity, and in fact, securing its sovereign borders. In the extant history of territorial politics in the region this, perhaps, is the finest illustration of the contrasting impacts of imperial policies.

To strengthen his political position and establish his authority, Abdur Rehman did what no previous Afghan Amir had done. "He claimed that his rule was based on divine sanction rather than derived from the consensus of the tribal *jirga*" (Ewans 2001: 73). This shift from a tribal to a temporal-spiritual authority helped Abdur Rehman pursue what the distinguished historian Louis Dupree (1973) has called 'internal imperialism' (417). Blocked by Russia in north and the northwest, Britain in the south and southeast and secure in the west by Anglo-Russian influence in and over Persia, Afghanistan's physical frontiers had assumed a measure of stability. The 'Great age of Afghan boundary-creation', as Lamb (1968) calls it, was in its final lap.

The British realised that with Abdur Rehman firmly installed, "his frontier had to be established once and for all" (Morgan 1981: 192). After 1878, Afghanistan had decidedly fallen beyond the Russian sphere of influence. Only Herat and the Pamirs offered passages of territorial intrigue. In 1881, General Skobelev routed the Tekke Turkmen, took Goek Teppe and unleashed the butchery earlier mentioned. The only territory now left to be conquered was the oasis of Merv, over which only Persia could lay sovereign claims. In early 1884, Russia announced the annexation of Merv, almost threatening to turn the agreement of 1873 into a fantastical ghost imperial doublespeak. An alarmed London, said the Duke of Argyll, had begun to suffer an acute bout of 'Mervousness'. There was no way the British to could challenge the move, but Russia well realised that any further movement towards the frontiers of Afghanistan was near impossible. Thus, the two sides agreed to set up a joint border demarcation commission, with the reluctant Amir's representatives on board, to negotiate a precise boundary along the indeterminate stretch of territory lying to the south of Merv between Amu Darya and the Afghan border with Persia along the Hari Rud range. But Russia was reluctant to cooperate. By 1885, the commission could only demarcate 200 miles from the Persian border where it began. Unable to resist the temptation, Russia kept moving southwards while its representatives at the commission kept bickering with their British counterparts fully with the intention of buying time. As the Russians approached Panjdeh, the northern most part of Afghan border, the British delivered a stern warning that occupation of Panjdeh would lead to 'disastrous', but unspecified, consequences, and an advance on Herat would be regarded as an act of war. In March 1885, the Russian and Afghan forces met in Panjdeh, exchanged fire and few Afghan soldiers died. This was a critical moment in the imperial rivalry, which, apart from making famous the little-known oasis, nearly caused a war. Since Panjdeh paid a nominal tribute to Herat, Abdur Rehman had some sovereign claim over it. That being the case, emotional temperatures quickly rose in Calcutta and London. Troops in India were mobilised, war credits were voted in London as Gladstone demanded £ 11,000,000, a huge sum in those days. But the Amir, in India at that moment, seemed resigned to the loss of Panjdeh. Taking the cue, tempers in London cooled down and negotiations ensued in May. The joint boundary commission reconvened and by June 1886 demarcation of boundary – running west to east – was

completed up to 50 miles of Amu Darya. Once again the Russians fell for the greener grassland south of the river. Negotiations halted. Only a year later did the demarcation exercise resume and on July 22, 1887, the protocol embodying the final agreement was signed. Eastward of the 1887 demarcation, the two sides agreed that Amu Darya would form the boundary. But the British were apprehensive about the mountainous region beyond, especially Chitral, which they had claimed a few years earlier and where the Russians seemed to be headed. The meaning of an Afghan buffer implied that the two empires must not remain in territorial contact. Hence, in 1893, a finger of Afghan territory, the Wakhan, was given to Afghanistan to keep apart the two empires. Although the Amir was reluctant to hold the remote territory, an increase in his subsidy secured his consent.

Thus, Afghanistan's current boundaries were secured by 1895. On the basis of the 1873 agreement, the two empires decided and demarcated its northern and northwestern boundaries carefully avoiding any physical contact between them. With Persia, only the Seistan boundary dispute remained which was settled in the 1960s. China met Afghanistan in a corner of the Wakhan corridor and the two countries settled the border by a 1963 treaty. The making of the Durand Line in 1893, its boundary with British India and later Pakistan, has not been discussed yet. We now turn to its history.

Towards November 12, 1893

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, threat of a French and later Russian invasion of British India by the end of 18th century had compelled the East India Company to become active in the region beyond the river Indus. The territory from the rugged terrain of Karakoram to the Balochistan wasteland had been a part of the Afghan empire. As agnatic rivalries dogged Afghan rulers, it became difficult for them to hold on to this region inhabited by the warring tribes, chiefly Pushtun and Baloch, who were "almost genetically expert at guerilla warfare after centuries of resisting all comers and fighting among themselves when no comers were available" (Dupree 1973: 425). The Sikhs under Ranjit Singh had taken due advantage of this situation to conquer as much of the former Afghan territories as they could. By the end of the first decade of the 19th century the

British had made contacts with the Amirs of Sindh and concluded a treaty of friendship with Ranjit Singh in 1809. In the following years, Ranjit Singh's continued occupation of Afghan territories, coupled with increasing British apprehensions of Russian invasion in the 1820s resulted eventually into the First Anglo-Afghan War.

The Sikh kingdom could do little to control the warring Pathans of the hills. Instead, its frontiers were established along the edge of the tribal lands. Within a decade of Ranjit Singh's death in 1839, the Sikh kingdom was absorbed into British India and it was this frontier that the latter took over in 1849. In 1843, Sindh was annexed and Brigadier General John Jacob was sent to pacify the province while another British official, Robert Sandeman, established a system of administration that employed minimal British interference in the region. (The Sandeman System still informs the Pakistan government's policy for the region.) When John Lawrence became the commissioner of Punjab, he opposed invocation of Forward policy beyond the administered border into Pusthun and Baloch lands. Though the policy of masterly inactivity avowed non-aggression on tribal territory and non-interference in tribal affairs, it is as much a fact that between 1849 and 1879, the British undertook 37 punitive expeditions across the administered border into the tribal lands. Afghanistan's internal turmoil throughout the period between the two Wars meant that its rulers could only wish of reintegrating the territories of the old Durrani empire. And when such efforts were made, like Dost Mohammad's repeated requests to the viceroy to hand over Peshawar, they yielded nothing. In 1877, the British informed Amir Sher Ali that he had no claims on Dir, Swat, Chitral and Bajaur (Dupree 1973: 425). Two years later, they declared the Khyber Pass, the Kurram district, Pishin, Sibi and Balochistan as the British government's territories through the Treaty of Gandamak. But despite its claim over these territories, the government exercised little effective control. Commenting upon the situation, Lytton wrote in 1877:

> I believe that our North-West Frontier presents at this moment a spectacle unique in the world; at least I know of no other spot where, after 25 years of peaceful occupation, a great civilized power has obtained so little influence over its semi-savage neighbours, and acquired so little knowledge of them, that a country within a day's ride of its most important garrison

> is an absolute *terra incognita*, and that there is absolutely no security for British life a mile or two beyond our border (quoted in Fraser-Tytler 1962: 186).

By the end of 1880s, much of the Russo-Afghan frontier had been settled but the Afghan Question had continued to linger in the form of the impending settlement of the Indo-Afghan frontier. The warring tribes had created enough turbulence. An overwhelming number of Pushtun population lived in British territories but maintained contacts across the border. Consequently, the loyalty of these tribes to the British government was perpetually in doubt. Afghanistan had found a stable ruler which was an ideal condition to settle the boundary; but the corollary of the Amir's stability was his activities in the British Indian Pushtun tribal land. Arguably, the focus of the Afghan Question was now the Indo-Afghan boundary.

When Abdur Rehman Khan became the Amir, one of the first questions he asked of the British political agent in Kabul was: "What are to be the boundaries of my dominion?" (quoted in Bilgrami 1972: 197). Though initially hesitant, he soon began to make his presence felt all along the south and southeastern frontier into Pushtun territories of British India. It helped him greatly that he had assumed the title *Amir-ul-Momineen*, or the Commander of the Faithful, which made him some kind of a spiritual head of not just the Muslims of Afghanistan, but to a large extent that of north-west India also. He almost certainly wished to include under his temporal and spiritual authority as much of the former Afghan territory as he could without inviting British hostilities. A special lure was Balochistan which provided access to the sea. According to Roberts, he "intrigued with the tribes (across the frontier) throughout his reign, prompting riots, raids and sometimes full-scale rebellion" (2003: 29). He grew anxious over British consolidation of frontier regions in the 1880s and described the railway line driven through the Khojak tunnel to New Chaman on the border facing Qandahar, as a 'knife thrust into my vitals' and ordered a boycott of the line and its terminus (Ewans 2001: 75). Abdur Rehman nonetheless maintained cordial relations with the viceroy Lord Dufferin during whose reign he had a considerably successful visit to India in 1885. In July 1888, he requested Dufferin to send a mission of British officials to Kabul to settle the boundary question along with other important issues. But the mission, due to be headed

by Sir Mortimer Durand, the foreign secretary of British Government in India, could not be received by the Amir and had to be postponed. The Amir claimed he was taken ill. The British thought it was a calculated move to buy time and possibly seek some more Pushtun territory through his proxies. At least this is what the new Viceroy Lord Lansdowne, who arrived in December 1888, thought. The result was less forbearance and a stern attitude towards the Amir. Lansdowne rebuked him for atrocities committed against Afghans during an internal Uzbek rebellion and refused his request for arms. Humiliated at what he deemed interference in his internal affairs, Abdur Rehman tried in vain to open direct negotiations with London owing to his discomfort and possible dislike of the viceroy in Calcutta. Even a personal letter to Lord Salisbury, the British prime minister, couldn't produce the result Abdur Rehman desired and he was asked by London to deal with the British Government in India as it was in the know of local affairs. Meanwhile, as the Amir had continued his trans-frontier activities around the pivotal Asmar province and in the Wazir country, the British had mounted military expeditions to control the tribes and in 1892 took the Turi tribe of Kurram valley under protection (Sykes 1981: 169-177; Ewans 2001: 78).

Possibly peeved at the Amir's attempts to open contacts with London, Lansdowne asked him to receive a mission, in 1892, armed with 10000 soldiers under General Frederick Roberts, now the commander in chief, to settle the boundary question. Earlier in the year, the Amir had thrice requested the viceroy to send British mission which the latter had refused. General Roberts was expected to be received by no later than October 1892 and Lansdowne expected the Amir's reply to his July 23 letter by September 1 (Bilgrami 1972: 226). There was absolutely no need for a battle-strong army contingent to accompany a peaceful mission and Abdur Rehman tactfully refused the request. Sensing a serious crisis in the making, the Amir sent an Englishman in his personal service, Salter Pyne, with two letters, one for the viceroy and another for Durand. Pyne's effort was successful. The mission was postponed. The crisis was averted. With assurances that the Amir was willing to settle the boundary, Pyne was sent with a map given to him by Durand showing the frontier territories of Wazir country, New Chaman, Chageh, Bulund Khel, Mohmand, Asmar and Chitral and the territories lying in between

as belonging to India. Abdur Rehman replied through a lengthy letter to the viceroy where, exhibiting diplomatic skills and impressive foresight, he argued that the territories in question contained warring tribes of his nationality and religion and with his sovereignty over them, he could use play them against his own enemies and that of the British government. On the other hand, he further stated,

> If you cut them out of my dominion, they will neither be of any use to you nor to me: you will always be engaged in fighting and troubles within them... In your cutting them away from me these frontier tribes who are people of my nationality and religion, you will make me weak, and my weakness is injurious for your Government (quoted in Bilgrami 1972: 228).

Not to be swayed by the Amir's protestations, Lansdowne ordered the squeezing out Afghan officials from the disputed areas of the tribal belt. One area where the Amir did not budge was Asmar as he held it in the same importance as Herat and Qandahar. Asmar lay in the province of Jalalabad and controlled the roads to the Chitral and the Pamirs.

The viceroy appointed Durand for a small, unarmed mission to Afghanistan. Pyne had convinced Abdur Rehman of Durand's sincerity and his upright record throughout and the Amir accepted the proposal of receiving the mission. Durand had first encountered the Amir in 1885 and from the accounts presented by his biographer Percy Sykes, the impression Durand drew of the Amir was not the most favourable. Importantly though, like Dufferin, Durand was a good judge of the Amir's character and thus was in a much better position than any other to negotiate with him. Abdur Rehman too had been suspicious of the foreign secretary and had conveyed the same to the viceroy through Pyne. But Pyne's advocacy coupled with his own scanning of the man during their initial meeting during the mission changed much of his opinion. The mission had left Peshawar in mid-September, 1893 and arrived to a grand welcome in Kabul the next month. The Agreement was signed between Durand and Abdur Rehman on November 12, 1893.

The agreement laid down the boundary as delimited on an accompanying map, which defined the southern and eastern limits of Afghanistan. The Amir managed to retain Asmar ceding Chitral, Swat and Bajaur. In addition he gave up his claims on New

Chaman and Chagai and was given the Birmal tract of the Wazir country. It was here that Wakhan was given to Afghanistan. His subsidy was raised from Rs 1.2 to 1.8 million a year. Confusion arose over the fate of Mohmand which the Amir believed fell on his side but Durand claimed otherwise. The issue became contentious very soon, like the entire Durand Line. It took four years for actual demarcation of the boundary, and even then the entire stretch could not be completed. Most trouble during the demarcation came from Waziristan. The November Agreement was also deemed as a ratification of the Treaty of Gandamak.

It is ideal that we conclude our discussion with a final description of the Afghan conundrum in the first half of the 20th century, wherein lies the genesis of the Pushtunistan issue. The British secured fresh confirmation of the Durand boundary and all existing treaties with Afghanistan with the new Amir Habibullah in 1905. During the First World War, the temptation to join the *jehad* called upon by the Ottoman Caliph was tremendous, but Afghanistan remained neutral. For his country's neutrality Habibullah sought rewards from the Viceroy Chelmsford, requesting him to guarantee in writing Afghanistan's perpetual independence. This the British Government in India refused to proffer. Habibullah was soon assassinated. His brother Nasrallah announced his claim to the throne, but it was Amanullah, the son of the deceased Amir, who captured the throne. This was 1919, and the British were caught in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Amanullah launched what is now known as the Third Anglo-Afghan War. The outcome was successful for Afghanistan in so far as the ensuing Treaty of Rawalpindi (signed on August 8, 1919) guaranteed full Afghan sovereignty, thus releasing the country from the restricting clutches of Gandamak. The Durand Line was described as a 'frontier' in the Treaty rather than a 'line of influence' as it had been previously termed (Roberts 2003: 41). Amanullah followed his father and grandfather in their policy of interference in Pushtun affairs. When the spectre of Partition began to show up, Afghanistan started making a case for the inclusion of 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 (Evans 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. That, of course, did not happen. 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. Another boundary was established through similar machinations which has remained contentious till date. Let us now turn to its history.

Chapter 3: The Making of the McMahon Line

A history of how some 46000 square miles of territory and its roughly 500 miles-long boundary – located on India's north-eastern edge, long forgotten and considered unimportant from any perspective – became one of the major causes of a war in 1962, goes back to the time when Warren Hastings had yet to injure Philip Francis in a duel, and, was some years away from a tedious impeachment process in the House of Commons at Edmund Burke's instance and inspiration. But this chapter must briefly outline the process of British conquest of Assam and its initial contacts with the Assam Himalayan territory before discussing Hastings' connection with our story. The following pages narrate the political vicissitudes that produced the McMahon Line in 1914 and beyond. The narration avoids persistent chronology and attempts to incorporate diverse historical viewpoints to produce a territorial history that is as conscious of the machinations of Great Game geopolitics as it is of specificities involved in the complex interplay of British Indian, Tibetan and Chinese relationships during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

After 1757 the East India Company's territorial expansion moved in all directions, including east. The region comprising the Brahmaputra valley, called Kamarupa or Assam, was ruled by the warring tribes of the Burmese Shans – the Ahoms – since the eighth century. However, in 1770 the disgruntled Moamarihas revolted against the ruling king and drove him out in 1774. A reign of chaos continued till 1794 when the ousted king appealed the British for help. Cornwallis, the governor general, sent a small contingent under a captain to the king's rescue. After Cornwallis' replacement with John Shore, the troops were pulled back and Assam once again plunged in chaos. The British came in control of Assam through the Treaty of Yandaboo (1826) – a result of the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824 which the Burmese king lost – whereby the king of Burma renounced his claims to Assam. Initially the Company acted as a suzerain of Assam and it was only in 1842 that the whole province came under direct British administration. The mountainous territory between Assam proper or chiefly the Brahmaputra valley and Tibet was inhabited by various tribes, chief among them being the Akas, the Daphlas, the

Abors, the Mors, the Monpas and the Mishmis. The terrain, running north to south, was difficult and tribes were inhospitable, if not actively hostile. British commercial interests soon developed substantially in Assam, primarily in tea plantations and timber trade. Traders from the plains of Assam saw it lucrative to cross over to the slopes of the tribal region for resource exploitation. Anticipating the trouble that uncontrolled commercial exploitation of the foothills may bring about, in 1873 the British drew a line, short of the foot of the hills, which no one could cross without proper authorisation. This was the 'Inner Line' which created a protected zone to control the spread of commercial and other potentially disturbing interests. Simultaneously, the administration also drew an 'Outer Line', coextensive with Bhutan's southern boundary, running east-west along the foot-hills. The Inner Line was the administrative boundary within which taxes were levied and revenues collected. The Outer Line was to be the political or international boundary of the British empire.[3] The two Lines were expected to prevent plainspeople from venturing into tribal territory and, similarly, prevent tribal raids into the tea plantations in the plains. The government hoped that this policy would "put an end to that infinite, slow but certain advance to dangerously exposed positions (of the tribal territory) which has been the source of difficulties" (cited in Verghese 2002: 48).

It was not inevitable but very likely that in the course of its territorial expansion in the 1760s and 1770s colonial India would have met the Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. The need for territorial contiguity was one factor, commerce was another. The Company, a commercial-colonial enterprise, relied upon its monopoly on China trade to make up for the imbalance earned in Bengal. Trade with China through Tibet would have augured well for the Company. Hastings, the first governor general, was a capable Company mercantilist.

Trade and Other Possibilities

By the time the Company began its territorial expansion in the subcontinent Tibet had become a closed country. Mongol conquest in the 13th century had brought some

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[3] The Outer Line would roughly form the present border between the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

measure of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. The Manchu capture of Peking in the 17th century established a priest-patron relationship between Lhasa and Peking. A Chinese resident commissioner, the Amban, was installed in Lhasa to direct Chinese policies in the Buddhist kingdom. The opportunity of direct contact between Tibet and the British was provided by the Bhutanese invasion of Cooch Behar in the plains of Bengal. In a complex story, not entirely relevant to our discussion, the Panchen Lama at Shigatse in Tibet communicated with Hastings in October 1774, which opened the way for a British mission. Hastings selected George Bogle for the job, instructing him to study the markets and resources of Tibet. Bogle was the first Englishman, but not the first European, to enter Tibet in December 1774. He could only move up to Tashilhunpo and while he was received with courtesy by the Panchen Lama, his request for a right of trade between Tibet and India was not answered. Hastings, satisfied with Bogle's mission, assigned him another one to Tibet, this time with instructions to open communications with China. But the deaths of the Panchen Lama and Bogle in 1780 and 1781 respectively meant that the mission could not take off. The next opportunity came in 1782, when the late Lama's brother wrote to Hastings to inform him that the new incarnation had been found. Hastings chose Captain Samuel Turner to offer congratulations and also explore the possibility of opening trade with Tibet. Turner too could not proceed beyond Tashilhunpo. However, both Bogle and Turner noted the Chinese influence on Tibet and the Tibetans' reluctance to acknowledge the same (Singh 1988: 3-5). Hastings left India soon after Turner's return. For a substantial period ahead there were no British envoys to Tibet.

The Company had vested interest in trading with China through Tibet. Any improvement in the sea route trade with China would have opened the Chinese market to all commercial enterprises in Britain, while a land route via Tibet would maintain the Company's monopoly (Singh 1988: 6). As the Company was contemplating ways to find an opening into Tibet, the Nepalese Gurkhas attacked the Panchen Lama's territory in 1788. When Tashilhunpo, in the background of friendship offers made during the Bogle and Turner missions, asked the British for help against invaders, Cornwallis only promised to not support the Gurkhas. A second invasion of Tibet by the Gurkhas in 1791

had the Chinese troops driving them out. The result was a substantial reorganisation of the Amban's powers and measures aimed at tighter Chinese control over political, economic and religious affairs of Tibet. British diplomacy, or the lack of it, during the Tibet-Nepalese crisis worked against the Company. Tibet formed an impression that the British had secretly helped the Gurkhas with troops. As a consequence, by 1792 all British hopes of trade through Tibet were decisively sealed. Chinese influence over Tibet increased altering the course set by Hastings. The same year Tibet closed all doors to foreigners. It would take a viceroy and geopolitician to open the kingdom 112 years later.

In 1846, the British tried to establish a *modus vivendi* on the frontier with western Tibet by involving the Chinese government but no real progress could be made. Once again in 1873 the British Government in India renewed efforts to open Tibet for regulated trade. In 1876, the Chinese undertook to protect any British mission that might be sent to Tibet. The Chinese commitment was soon put to test when a British mission under Colman Macaulay was set to head towards Lhasa. When the mission arrived at the Tibetan frontier in Darjeeling in early 1886 the Tibetans, fearing an invasion, crossed into Sikkim territory to establish preventive fortification along the route to be taken by the proposed mission (Deepak 2005: 20-21). Sikkim and Bhutan's allegiances lay with Tibet and the latter considered them its dependency. The Chinese could obviously not have problems with such an arrangement. But, for the British, Tibetan incursion into Sikkim was taken to be a clear violation of their Treaty with Sikkim of 1861.[4] British and Chinese dispatches asking the Tibetan commander at Lingtu – where the fortification was built inside Sikkim border – to withdraw and a British letter to same effect for the Dalai Lama fetched no response. In as much as this displayed strong Tibetan defiance, it also exposed the Chinese weakness in influencing Tibetan authorities. The Viceroy Dufferin ordered forced removal of the Tibetan forces from Lingtu, which the 2000-strong British contingent under Brigadier Graham achieved in March 1888.

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[4] Under the Treaty, Sikkim acknowledged British supremacy in its external and internal affairs. The king of Sikkim could not cede any territory without British permission; neither could any armed forces traverse its territory without British approval. The British Government held that these clauses were breached by Tibetan presence (see, Abrol 1974: 80-87).

This was the first act of armed conflict between Tibet and the British. More important, it hastened in both Peking and Calcutta the need to define and decide the status of Sikkim and demarcation of its borders. This was achieved by the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890. The Convention recognised Sikkim as a British protectorate and arranged for the demarcation of its boundaries with a joint Anglo-Chinese guarantee. In 1893 a set of Tibetan Trade Regulations were attached to the Convention which provided for the opening of a trade mart at Yatung along with the stationing of a British trade agent. Trade disputes arising in Tibet between British and Chinese or Tibetan subjects were to be settled by the Political Officer in Sikkim and the Chinese Frontier Official. Since no Tibetan membership was sought or felt necessary for the agreements of 1890 and 1893, both the trade mart and the process of demarcation of Sikkim's boundaries were actively obstructed by Tibetan officials (Singh 1988: 9-10). Loss of Sikkim's loyalty and complete disregard for its historical boundaries left Tibetans sour. It only led the Buddhist kingdom towards greater isolation. On the other hand, the Chinese ineffectiveness over Tibet had become apparent to the British. Amidst calls for British move towards Tibet, Elgin, the viceroy, could justify restraint by showing the trade expansion of nearly 500 percent with that country between 1890 and 1898 (Singh 1988: 10). His successor, however, was known for his impatience and Russophobia. He would take nothing less than a British Forward policy towards Tibet.

Extra-Territoriality by Force

Curzon's arrival as British India's viceroy coincided with the revision of the Trade Regulations of 1893. In his notes to George Hamilton, the secretary of state for India, he laid out his government's approach to the Tibetan frontier. Curzon refused to accept Yatung as a satisfactory post for Indian trade and suggested Phari, further up the Chumbi valley, with a resident trade agent (Singh 1988: 11). The viceroy sought to communicate directly with the Dalai Lama in Lhasa, but neither his (Curzon's) agent's nor his own letters were opened. The Tibetan authorities explained that direct correspondence with the British would displease the Chinese Amban. The Dalai Lama's silence drew expected reaction from the viceroy: "It is really the most grotesque and indefensible thing that at a distance of little more than 200 miles from our frontier, this

community of unarmed monks should set us perpetually at defiance" (cited in Singh 1988: 11). We have seen the rapid advances Tsarist Russia made in Central Asia in the last quarter of the 19th century in the previous chapter. It did not take long for Curzon to detect a Russian spectre on the Tibetan plateau. The visits of Aguan Dorjieff, the Dalai Lama's tutor and a Buriat monk from Russian Siberia, to Nicholas II in St. Petersburg in 1900 and 1901 received considerable attention in international press. A Russian protectorate over Tibet, Curzon stated in a letter to Hamilton, would "constitute a distinct menace" and "a positive source of danger to the Indian empire" (cited in Chakravarti 1969: 447). Around the same time, rumours were afloat that Russia and China had signed a secret treaty whereby China renounced its claim over Tibet in return for Russian guarantee of Chinese territorial integrity (Chakravarti 1969: 446; also see Woodman 1969: 101-06). Curzon, at least in his official communication, appeared clear about the aims of his Tibet policy: one, he did not want British occupation of that country; two, he did not want any one else seizing it either to make it a buffer between Russian and British Indian empires (Singh 1988: 13-14). It was, to Curzon, the

> most extraordinary anachronism of the twentieth century that there should exist within less than three hundred miles of the borders of British India, a State and Government, with whom political relations do not so much as exist, and with whom it is impossible even to exchange written communication (quoted in Singh 1988:11).

The consequence of the events of the 1900-1902 was that in January 1903 Curzon, having analysed the Tibetan situation, officially outlined the measures he deemed fit. He proposed an armed expedition to Lhasa to sufficiently intimidate the Tibetans and open British-Tibetan trade. The India Office as well as the Cabinet viewed Curzon's proposals with scepticism. Hamilton, having confirmed from the Russian ambassador in London that no secret Russo-Chinese treaty existed and obtained assurance that owing to common frontier, British India could use force against Tibet to ensure treaty obligation, did not see the need for a military expedition. Undeterred, Curzon sought fresh justifications and by mid-1903 managed qualified support of London for the proposed mission.

Major Francis Younghusband, the veteran of Pamir explorations, was chosen by Curzon to lead the mission. Troops were attached with his mission as befitting a British

commissioner. By moving beyond Yatung the British were breaching their own obligations of 1890 and 1893, but such breaches were typical of Forward policy impulses. Throughout the expedition's tenure Tibetans showed reluctance and defiance they could muster. When they offered dialogue at Khamba Dzong and Gyanste, Younghusband shirked claiming that the rank of Tibetan officials was well below his own. His brief was to march towards Lhasa and sign a treaty with Tibet in its capital. Couple of armed skirmishes broke out along his march to Lhasa which claimed many Tibetan lives. Before Younghusband's arrival in Lhasa the Dalai Lama had escaped to Mongolia. The British commissioner and the Chinese Amban suitably conspired to depose the Dalai Lama. The resulting Lhasa Convention between the British and Tibet was signed by the Dalai Lama's representative and Younghusband on 7 September 1904. The Convention had nine articles attached to it. The most relevant for the present purpose were Article 1, which recognised the Sikkim-Tibet frontier as laid down in 1890 and Article 9, through which Tibet agreed to not have dealings of any kind with any foreign power without British consent (Singh 1988: 28-30).

In securing certain terms of the Lhasa Convention Younghusband had overran his brief. Yet, his expedition meant that the

> British had demonstrated conclusively that they had the power to intervene in Tibet whenever they chose and neither the Chinese, with their proud boast of 'supervising' the Tibetan administration, nor yet the Dalai Lama with his much-vaunted 'spiritual and temporal authority' could stop them from doing so. Additionally, the bubble of Russian intrigue, of the great White Tsar rushing to the help of the Lama, was pricked (Mehra 1974: 16).

Younghusband's success had its limitations, though. The Chinese Amban had refused to sign the Convention under instructions from the Wai-chiao-pu (the Chinese Foreign Office). Chinese recognition of the Convention would have undermined its sovereign claims over Tibet which the Convention clearly disregarded. Additionally, France, Germany, Italy and the United States had protested strongly to the Wai-chiao-pu about Article 9 of the Convention (Mehra 1974: 19). The terms of that Article had unmistakably made Tibet a British protectorate. International validity of the Convention became a concern for the British. The Chinese took advantage of the position to press for

British recognition of its sovereignty over Tibet while the most Britain was willing to concede was China's suzerainty. Dramatic diplomacy between the two produced the so-called Adhesion Agreement with China in April 1906. The Agreement implied China's control over Tibet and, among other things, secured Chinese recognition of the Lhasa Convention.

It is interesting that while Curzon was engaged in ensuring strategic depths at the peripheries of the subcontinent against a possible Russian adventure, the Conservative government of Balfour in London had already begun the moves in March 1903 to seek a negotiated settlement with Russia on the question of Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet (Mehra 1974: 41). In retrospect, it appears that views in London and Calcutta varied in direct proportion to their distance from the scene of action, in this case Tibet. The Conservatives could not, however, strike a deal with the Russians and it fell upon the Liberal government of Henry Campbell Bannerman to take the credit. The negotiations opened by Arthur Nicolson and Alexander Isvolski in June 1906 lead to the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 31 August 1907. The section concerning Tibet included five articles by which, to summarise, the two empires agreed to respect Tibet's territorial integrity, recognised Chinese suzerainty in Tibet[5] binding them to negotiate with Tibet only through China. The Agreement also denied the two empires the right to send representatives to Lhasa.

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 worked to China's advantage. Since mid-19th century, it had become increasingly clear to the Tibetans and, importantly, to the British, that China's gossamer sovereignty over Tibet had little real influence. The Conventions of 1906 and 1907 gave international recognition to Chinese suzerainty claims over Tibet and the second Agreement, in fact, undid the advantages made possible by Younghusband's expedition. As in the past Tibet was kept out of the negotiations and the settlements. Interestingly, the Afghan clauses of the Convention of 1907 required the Amir's consent before they could become

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[5] The exact words were: "In conformity with the admitted principle of the suzerainty of China over Tibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiating with Tibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government" (cited in Gupta 1974: 62).

operational. No such provision was made for Tibet and the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan government was quick to realise its disadvantages. It began to levy duty on Indo-Tibetan trade route at Phari, rebuilt forts along the trade-route and prohibited traders from travelling to Khamba Dzong. Opportunity was favourable for China to reassert its control over Tibet. The execution of this Chinese policy between 1906 and 1910 hurried the British Government in India to rethink the need for a strategic frontier with Tibet-China north of the Outer Line and east of Bhutan, that is, the tribal country of Assam Himalayas.

Chang Yin-t'ang was appointed the new Chinese imperial commissioner for Tibet in late 1906. His task was to destroy the little British influence that was left in Tibet and gain control of that country substantially weakened by the Younghusband expedition and the Dalai Lama's absence. The Chinese made renewed claim to suzerainty over Bhutan and Nepal. In the Chumbi valley Chang set out to impose measures aimed at humiliating the British trade agent stationed there. The purpose of this was to show that the Chinese were in control of Tibet (Lamb 1966: 43). He issued orders to Tibetan officials in Gyantse that any contact with the British had to be made through the Chinese. The Panchen Lama was intimidated lest he maintain contacts with the British, and the Amban during Younghusband expedition, Yu T'ai, was chained and sent to Peking for his inaction and timidity. The messages intended for the British as well as for Tibetans had begun to reach.

The most disconcerting aspect of the renewed Chinese activity for the British Government in India was the interventions of the Chinese General Chao Erh-feng along and into the north-eastern frontier area. His armed march to Lhasa in 1910 led the Dalai Lama, who had arrived in Lhasa in November 1909 after five years of exile, to seek escape to British India. Having already brought interior Tibetan districts under Chinese jurisdiction, Chao's forces moved towards frontier districts of Pomed (also Pome) and Zayul bringing them in direct contact with the Assam Himalayas on the south (Deepak 2005: 55-56). Chao soon started exerting some measure of control over tribal territories. Since this area lay south of the Outer Line there was little British influence in the region.

It was soon reported that over a thousand Chinese troops had entered Rima and were collecting taxes. Other reports claimed that the Chinese had come to Walong and erected boundary marks at the Yapek River (Lamb 1966: 333). Another British official returning from Peking via Tibet reported to having met Mishmi headmen on their way to a local Chinese headquarters to express their loyalty as the Chinese had exerted lordship on them (Singh 1988: 54). Other reports emerging from the north-eastern frontier suggested that the Chinese troops had claimed these territories as part of the Manchu empire, and if the tribespeople refused loyalty they were threatened with military action. There were also reports of the Chinese having distributed some form of passports or 'warrants of protection' in the name of Chao Erh-feng in some parts of the region (Deepak 2005: 57). The often vague and wavering frontier policy of the British Government in India could no longer be continued. Even if Chao's interventions in the tribal regions were less intense than it was being suggested, the fact remained that British commercial interests in Assam – especially tea plantations and timber – had to be protected. Besides this commercial imperative there was also the strategic compulsion of halting the Chinese advance for the defence of India. The unchartered northeast frontier became, in a very short span, a real and immediate strategic concern. There was, however, a previous history of British engagements with this region. A recap will be useful.

The Forgotten Frontier

The conservative British newspaper *The Morning Post* had the following lines for its readers on 10 February 1910:

> A great Empire, the future military strength of which no man can foresee, has suddenly appeared on the North-East of India. The problem of the North-West Frontier thus bids fair to be duplicated in the long run, and a double pressure placed on the defensive resources of the Indian Empire... China, in a word, has come to the gates of India, and the fact has to be reckoned with (cited in Woodman 1969: 142).

Of course no man, or for than matter woman, could foresee the demise of Manchu dynasty the next year, but the anticipation of the report was uncannily sound. Though it remains difficult to realistically imagine true extent of Chinese intentions, it was rational enough for the British Government in India to be alarmed about Assam Himalayan

territory. Ironically, however, this frontier had been off the immediate British interest for the longest period. As Mehra (1974) points out, this frontier "remarkably quiescent for the most part" has been called a "'neglected' and a 'forgotten' frontier" (1). For Dalhousie it was a 'bore'. Curzon, for all his animations, was decidedly against the development of a 'North East Frontier Province'.

Initial contacts with this virtual *terra incognita* (for the British, since the tribespeople knew their respective territories well) go back to the time of the Treaty of Yandaboo. From curious explorers to enthusiastic botanists and punitive expeditions of the British – people of many professions ventured the foreboding territory. A certain R. Wilcox was perhaps the first to explore the Lohit Valley between 1825 and 1828 producing a sympathetic record of the Mishmis. In 1845, E.A. Rowlatt made an expedition to the Mishmi Hills and wrote of the customs and culture of the people there in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. John Butler chronicled the Mishmis two years later. Similar accounts were produced of the Abors of the Dihong Valley (see Woodman 1969: 108-120). The British left the tribes alone for most part, but would launch punitive expeditions if tribal raids harmed their interests. Such experiences marked their relation where in they entered into agreements that kept their respective concerns separate. In 1844, the Akas agreed through a treaty to inform the British of any significant development in their country and received pension in return. The Daphlas informally agreed to curb their raids in 1835, 1837 and 1852. Similar treaties were signed with the Abors in 1862-63 and 1866 (Appadorai et al. 1960: 355-356). In 1882 Jack Francis Needham was inducted as Assistant Political Officer to deal with the tribes of the frontier. He was to act as a 'special advisor' on all political questions relating to the frontier and its tribes. It was Needham who undertook the first important and deep penetration of the hills in 1886 trekking up to the Lohit valley and into Tibet. He recommended that a road be built along his route to the Tibetan border which could act as a trade outlet for British goods. The British Government in India did not approve the proposal as it wanted to avoid potential skirmishes in a hostile land (Maxwell 1971: 40). He launched a ruthless punitive expedition in 1894 in response to an incipient rebellion of the Bor Abors, the Passi Abors and the Mishmis in 1893 (Mehra 1974: 2). Despite all of

this, British awareness of the area beyond the Outer Line was remarkably little and it remained so till the closing years of 1910s made further expeditions necessary.

By this time, chief among those who advocated an extension of the Outer Line to the watershed of the Himalayas was the Viceroy Minto (Woodman 1969: 143). But Morley, the secretary of state for India between 1906 and 1910, cautioned against such moves. Soon Morley was gone and Chao Erh-feng's activities launched India into a Forward policy of sorts. Lancelot Hare, the lieutenant governor of Assam, advocated to the new Viceroy Hardinge in November 1910:

> We only now claim suzerainty up to the foot of the hills. We have an inner line and an outer line. Up to the inner line we administer in the ordinary way. Between the inner and the outer lines we only administer politically ... Now should the Chinese establish themselves in strength or obtain complete control up to our outer line, they could attack us whenever they please and defence would be extremely difficult. ... It seems to me, in view of the possibility of the Chinese pushing forward, that it would be a mistake not to put ourselves in a position to take up the suitable strategic points of defence (quoted in Singh 1988: 52).

Hardinge remained initially unconvinced. But by 1911, the Chinese and British approach to the frontier had become discernible. "Chinese officials were sent to probe the loyalties of the tribal people and the British officials went forth to collect as much geographical and strategic intelligence for use against Chinese encroachments" (Singh 1988: 53). Back in 1908 an explorer, Noel Williamson, had toured along the Passi Minyong country and followed this by travelling along the Lohit to Rima. In early 1911 he travelled to the Walong post and reported Chinese occupation of Rima. On his second attempt to probe deep into the Dihang valley Williamson was murdered with his escort of 44 people by the Abors. His murder led Hardinge's government to pursue an active policy of 'loose political control' of the frontier. This time London's approach was forthcoming. Towards this end British officials and explorers were sent to collect information necessary for the external frontier. Though, from all accounts it appears that the government did not have a blueprint for final settlement of the new international boundary at this point. Survey parties were briefed to collect data about the Lohit, the Tsangpo, the Dihang, the Dangma and other river valleys. The General Staff was to determine the best military line on the basis of their reports (Woodman 1969: 146-147). Accordingly, Captain Bailey crossed

Rima and Mishmi country moving up to Peking and reported points of tension in the border areas. Similarly, W.C.M. Dundas, assistant political officer at Sadiya, led a mission to the Mishmi country along the upper Lohit valley. By mid-1912, a skeleton of British administration had already begun to emerge and the northeast frontier was divided into Western, Central and Eastern sections (Woodman 1969: 149).

In contrast to this pattern was Tawang, a wedge to the east of Bhutan. The area was heavily influenced by Tibetan political, cultural and religious influence. The great monastery of Tawang was located here and it was, and recognised as such by the British, a Tibetan territory. Tawang was to become the most controversial point of dispute between China and India in the eastern sector.

The Simla Conference

The Republican revolution of 1911-1912, which ended over 2000 years of imperial rule in China, brought Yuan Shih-kai to power. His government issued an official order making Tibet another province of China. The presidential order, in effect, asserted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet suggesting that the new government's policies regarding eastern Tibet and Assam Himalayas had not changed. The revolution had changed the character of China proper and the new regime was in urgent need for international legitimacy and financial assistance. Russia and Britain saw in this the opportunity to trade China's needs with a settlement of the status of Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet. For the British this was an opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with Lhasa without disquieting Russia.[6]The British ambassador in Peking, John Jordan, submitted a Foreign Office memorandum to the Chinese government in August 1912 which, in the main, proposed acceptance of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet but would not allow Chinese interference in Tibet's internal administration. British financial assistance and political recognition was contingent on the acceptance of this memorandum. In

[6] The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had forbidden such a step. The government now hoped that by recognising Russian influence in Mongolia – which had not found a mention in the 1907 Agreement – it could gain a similar concession in Tibet. Russia had taken advantage of this situation to encourage Mongolian independence from China and on 21 October 1912 signed the Russo-Mongolian Treaty. For Britain, Russian move in Mongolia offered a bargaining counter: British recognition of Russian interests in Mongolia for Russian acceptance of British relations with Tibet.

London the government had explored the possibility of revising the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 with Sazanov, Russian foreign minister (Singh 1988: 64-67). Russia required some *quid pro quo*, but those relating to Afghanistan and not Mongolia, which the British could not concede. There is some debate over British interpretation of Sazanov's stand. Woodman (1969), for example, points out that the Secretary of State Crewe interpreted Sazanov's position as giving a green light to the British to go ahead in Tibet as long as nothing was done which openly defied the 1907 Convention (151). It is clear, however, that London concentrated once again on the Chinese acceptance of the August memorandum, which the latter seemed in no hurry to respond. The British Government in India was becoming increasingly uneasy about Chinese activities in the frontier region. Military experts worked out a boundary with which they could contain China and the same was communicated to London in early days of January 1913 (Woodman 1969: 151).

The sum of these activities was the British policy over the Tibetan Question, formulated in a memorandum of 27 January 1913, which in itself was based upon the August memorandum submitted to the Chinese government. This reformulated policy would concede Chinese suzerainty over Tibet in return of Chinese guarantee of its internal autonomy. For this to take effect Tibet's physical dimensions had to be defined. Since Tibet bordered the troubled north-eastern frontier, any such definition would mitigate that problem as well, or so it was thought. Woodman puts the plan thus: "If Tibet and China could be persuaded or diplomatically blackmailed into attending a tri-partite conference, Russia being kept informed of some, if not all of the proceedings, then the British objective of a strategic frontier might be the result" (1969: 151). Accordingly, on 23 May 1913, London invited the Chinese government to take part in a joint conference to settle the Tibetan question through a tripartite agreement. A similar invitation was sent to the Tibetan government. The Chinese were reluctant to accept the invitation and objected to Tibetan participation, but eventually conceded (see Lamb 1966: 456-476). Though the venue was Simla, through which the Conference is so called, meetings took place at Simla and Delhi between 13 October 1913 and 3 July 1914. The Chinese government sent Ivan Chen, a seasoned diplomat with London experience, as its

plenipotentiary. The Dalai Lama sent the Lonchen Shatra, his chief minister, while the British Government in India was represented by Henry McMahon, the foreign secretary of India. Historians have chronicled the proceedings of the Conference exhaustively. For the present concern, however, its important outcomes will suffice.

After Tibet and China presented their respective territorial claims, McMahon proposed a division of Tibet into two zones, an Inner and an Outer Tibet. The Dalai Lama's regime was allowed complete and effective autonomy in Outer Tibet under a titular Chinese suzerainty. In the remaining ethnic Tibetan parts constituting Inner Tibet, the new Chinese Republic could secure its historical positions. Lhasa's theocratic authority was to prevail across the two zones (Lin 2004: 27). Probably inspired from a similar division of Mongolia, this was a fine move aimed at taking away from the Chinese the gains made by the last days of the Manchu empire, and, more importantly, ensuring that direct territorial contact with the Chinese on the north-eastern frontier did not exist. On 17 February 1914, McMahon presented a map in which the boundary dividing Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet was drawn in blue, while the boundary of 'Greater Tibet' was drawn in red. The southern extent of this boundary in red line was simultaneously and effectively the Tibetan border with the north-eastern tribal territory. After much Chinese procrastinations and some Tibetan concession on the proposal, McMahon managed to get Chen's initial (not signature) on 27 April 1914 on the draft agreement and the accompanying illustrative map. As it turned out, the Chinese government refused to accept the proposed zonal divisions and did not ratify the agreement (Maxwell 1971: 48).

The Simla Conference was convoked for tripartite talks to solve the Tibetan question between China and Tibet with the British acting as an 'honest broker'. However, McMahon opened bilateral negotiations with the Lonchen Shatra on the north-eastern border issue in February-March 1914. London had instructed the foreign secretary to not entertain such bilateral negotiations as it would contravene the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention. But McMahon seems to have taken as his brief Minto's proposal of October 1910 to secure a buffer between the north-eastern frontier of India and Tibet (Singh 1988:

78) and a memorandum of the Chief of the General Staff, drawn up while the Conference was underway, which asked him to explore with the Lonchen the possibility of such a frontier "to meet the forward policy of China" (Woodman 1969: 179). Negotiations with the Lonchen culminated in the exchange of secret notes on 24 and 25 March 1914 through which McMahon clinched an understanding on the north-eastern border with Tibet. In due course of time, like the Durand Line, this one came to be called the McMahon Line. The Chinese plenipotentiary was not informed of the bilateral negotiations. The McMahon Line was thus in breach of the Conventions of 1906 and 1907. Though Chen was not informed of the meetings and secret exchange of notes (there was no agreement), he was shown the map on which the southern part of the red McMahon Line ran and which he initalled on 27 April 1914. McMahon's 'diplomatic sleight of hand', as Maxwell calls it, was that he got Chen to at least initial the map, which implied that the Chinese were in know of the new boundary.

British explorations of the tribal region had continued through the duration of the Conference. After F.M. Bailey's return from an impressive expedition of the Tsangpo valley, McMahon found himself more familiar with the topography to more accurately draw his red line (see Lamb 1966: 530-566 for extensive discussion on this). The notes of 24 and 25 March 1914, by which the Lonchen accepted the McMahon Line, did not include any verbal description of the Line or any mention of the principle on which it was drawn (Maxwell 1971: 51). The McMahon alignment pushed the Outer Line northward by about 60 miles, thus lifting it from foothills to the crest line of the Assam Himalayas. As Lamb (1966) points out, it did not strictly follow the watershed principle either to create a continuous boundary line as it cut rivers flowing south, the most important being the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra. To simplify, with the territorial gains made by the McMahon Line British India came to claim nearly 50000 square miles of territory and delimited roughly 850 miles of border which included Tawang, the Lohit, Siyang and Siyon valleys. Given that Tawang was considered a Tibetan territory even as the Conference was underway, this appeared an astonishing achievement. The Lonchen agreed to cede Tawang apparently in response to the promise of British securing Tibetan autonomy from China, diplomatic support and limited military aid in case of armed struggle with China.

He also managed to secure the right of the Tibetan government to collect certain traditional taxes in the Tawang tract and other valleys. McMahon also assured the Lonchen that future adjustments in the boundary could be made as and when the need arises and better information becomes available (Singh 1988: 80). On July 3 1914, London sent a telegram instructing McMahon that a bilateral agreement with Tibet could and should not be signed. It could not reach him on time. Chen's government had till now prevented him from signing the Convention. McMahon and the Lonchen were fully capable of doing so. And they did. McMahon promptly brought the Conference to a close.

Forgotten Again, Rediscovered and Causes War

The Simla Conference did not achieve what it wanted. But that which was never made explicit, and pursued, also did not gain immediate approval. If the Chinese had signed the proposed zonal division on 27 April 1914, a case for the legality of the McMahon Line could still be made. The Chinese, in fact, repudiated it. London also did not view with favour the Conference or the McMahon Line claiming that it was invalid since the Chinese did not accept it (Gupta 1971: 523-524). Indeed, London's reply to Hardinge's first formal communication about the McMahon Line was that the government could not endorse the same at that time and that these dealings should be treated as personal to McMahon. The World War soon engulfed Europe and the McMahon Line was forgotten once again. It became, to quote many historians of the Line, a 'dead letter'.

On its part, China tried to unsuccessfully renegotiate with Britain on the basis of Simla in 1915, 1916 and 1919 (Mehra 1972: 299). Internal turmoil prevented China from exercising any influence in Tibet and adjacent areas (Lin 2004: 28). Even after the War was over, the frontier remained ignored. And it remained so for little over 20 years. In 1921 the Foreign Office in London ruled that, in light of the Russian Revolution, the Convention of 1907 no longer held (Mehra 1972: 303). The British Government in India was free to conduct relations with Tibet as it deemed fit. It could thus publish the proceedings of the Simla Conference, bilateral agreement between Tibet and the British

and the secret exchange of notes on the McMahon Line in the official compendium of Aithicison's *Treaties* – the official record of all "Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries". In fact the revised edition of the *Treaties*, published in 1929, only mentioned the Simla Conference in the passing without elaborating on its proceedings. A possible reason for withholding the publications of documents related to the Conference was that "its publication would have the effect of arousing in China renewed public interest in Tibet and anti-British comments" (Lin 2004: 31). Equally, the British Government in India made little efforts to make the McMahon Line effective. Intermittent expeditions were launched in the region but not with any explicit intent of registering permanent political presence.

In the late 1920s the Kuomintang government reunified China and launched, in the 1930s, what could best be called a cartographic offensive on the north-eastern frontier. Minus any effective control, the Chinese government carved out a province called Xikang which included substantial territory south of the McMahon Line. Xikang, though almost entirely illusory in nature, was officially sketched out by Chinese map-makers and popularised in China (Lin 2004: 30). In British India, however, it was Olaf Caroe, a deputy secretary in the foreign and political department, who became instrumental in reviving the McMahon Line.[7]It was curios that, like the Chinese, even British Indian administrators were unaware about the territorial limits of their empire. Caroe's enquiry to the Assam government about the Line elicited a reply which held Tawang to be an independent country with some indirect allegiance to Tibet (Gupta 1971: 528). He was equally astonished to find that while the Burmese government knew of the Line's existence as an international boundary the Assam government was clueless. The political officer in Sikkim had not known that the McMahon Line was a real border (Hoffmann 1990: 20). In a shrewd display of tact and manipulation, Caroe campaigned for official British recognition of the McMahon Line. The most effective way to ensure this was to get the 1914 agreements published in Aitchison's *Treaties*. This was 1937 and

[7] This happened when, in 1935, a British botanist F. Kingdon Ward was arrested by Tibetan officials on the charge of illegal entry into Tibetan territory. When the matter came to Caroe, he rediscovered the existence of the McMahon Line and posed a reminder-cum-question to the Tibetan officials. He claimed and asked whether the Tibetan officials were sure that the botanist had crossed over to the Tibetan side of the McMahon Line, advising them to be careful about not violating the boundary agreed upon in 1914.

by now, the India Office was prepared to publish them but unwilling to grant the publication any publicity. The changes were allowed to appear in 1938 and Caroe contrived to get the amendments made, retaining the 1929 publishing dates. Original copies of the 1929 edition were recalled and destroyed, but three of them escaped this suppression and were later found at the libraries of Harvard University, India Office and the National Archives in New Delhi (Hoffmann 1990: 21). Similarly, popular atlases like *The Times* were reminded of the "trifling loss of some 40000 square miles territory of the British Empire" (Singh 1988: 111). The amendments were made. The Survey of India followed suit.

In 1936 Tibet made it clear that its acceptance of the McMahon Line – which also meant withdrawal from Tawang among other places – was contingent on British efforts to secure the Tibet-China relationship on the basis of Simla agreements. The British Government in India had not succeeded in this effort thus far and was now reluctant to pursue the case. The subsequent years witnessed mixed British approaches to the McMahon boundary. Proponents of Forward Policy, like the Assam Governor Robert Reid, suggested active British presence in Tawang to drive out the Tibetans. An expedition under Captain G.S. Lightfoot to Tawang in 1938 produced sorry results. Tibetan officials refused to vacate Tawang and continued to collect taxes under his nose (Maxwell 1971: 57; Woodman 1969: 200-201). It had also become clear that the people of Tawang did not know they were now under British India's jurisdiction, and changed maps could do little to convince them. Soon the Second World War ensued and in the light of Japanese progress in South East Asia the north-eastern frontier gained prominence. Another mission under J.P. Mills was sent to make good the McMahon Line. Despite his energetic foray Mills could scarcely budge Tibetan officials who argued that a substantial territory south of McMahon Line lay under Tibetan jurisdiction (Maxwell 1971: 59-60). The British now proposed that Tawang-India boundary should be placed at Se La pass or even further south. Till 1945, the Tibetans remained unyielding.

The change in the India's international status after 15 August 1947 required that the issue of responsibility of the treaties signed by the British Government in India be

clarified. Especially those existing international treaty rights and obligations which had local and territorial applications. The territories of independent India were defined as "those under the sovereignty of His Majesty which, immediately before the appointed day, were included in British India". This effectively meant that India assumed responsibility for all treaties and obligations signed by the British as its successor state. In October 1947 Lhasa telegraphed to the Indian government an incredible list of frontier territories, including Walong, Mon, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling, Ladakh etc., to be returned to Tibet. Indian reply was not a categorical denial of these claims, but an assurance that until new agreements are made their bilateral relationship could, and ideally should, continue. It felt no need to take the issue seriously partly because the claims were meant to only test India's approach to border issues and also because these claims, made by a protectorate, were ridiculous in nature.

India, under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership, sought a balance between Tibet's autonomy and a friendship with China, products of anti-imperialist struggles that they were. It was quick to grant recognition to the People's Republic. Indian response to Chinese declaration of 'Peaceful Liberation of Tibet' amounted to nothing. As a mark of anti-imperialism it renounced, through the Sino-Indian Treaty of 1954, the extra-territorial rights it inherited from the imperial government. Though the border issue between the two countries was contentious it was not taken up for intensive discussions during the negotiations for the Treaty. It also recognised Tibet as a 'region' of China. India's own position on Tawang was that Tibetan influence over the territory had been only religious and not political in nature. It accepted the McMahon Line, but argued that the boundary was not merely a British invention. It posited that traditional and historical Indian political control over entire north-eastern tribal region had existed from Assam side for centuries before British conquest and, moreover, that it was a natural boundary following the watershed crest of Assam Himalayas (Hoffmann 1990: 27; Appadorai et al. 1960). Relations between China and India had strained by the end of 1950s. Chinese cartographic claims over what India claimed to be its territory, like those published in the *China Pictorial*, intensive incursion in the Aksai Chin region and the Khampa rebellion in Tibet, all precipitated the war.

After his retirement, McMahon delivered a presidential address on "International Boundaries" to the Royal Society of Arts, London, in 1935. "The lessons of history teach us", he said,

> the grave political dangers of an ill-defined and undemarcated frontier. . . . I fear that future history may have to record yet further wars arising from disputes over undemarcated boundaries (quoted in Gupta 1971: 530).

The year 1962 saw unhappy fulfillment of his fear. The war with China was a debilitating experience for a postcolonial India still in its infancy. In the lead up to the conflict, China maintained a political position claiming that imperial boundaries must be re-decided. India, on the other hand, upheld the legacy of legal-institutional line bequeathed by the British and defended the legality of the McMahon boundary. The relations between the two countries remained sour for a considerable period. The thaw witnessed in the last two decades has involved progress in dialogue over resolving the boundary disputes. However, China has refused to present a map of its territorial claims and, interestingly, there are signs that India may be willing to concede territories for peace. While uncertainty still prevails, the history outlined in preceding pages shows the stakes involved on both sides. Are the two states set to overcome the ingrained habit of being territorial? We do not know and the answer is not particularly necessary for our concern. We need only to identify the processes involved in the construction of boundaries in the subcontinent. Another history awaits us, to which we can now turn.

Chapter 4: The Making of the Radcliffe Lines

'Time', they had briefed him in London, 'is short. It's too late
For mutual reconciliation or rational debate...

But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,
A continent for better or worse divided.

(W.H. Auden, 'Partition')

It is one of those interesting facets of writing history that a chronicle of the independence of the subcontinent also becomes a narrative of its Partition. The trap is true in reverse too. Independence invariably forces its way into an account of Partition. Chronologically, of course, independence precedes Partition. But the proximity of the two events is callously interconnected, and perhaps reasonably so. It is difficult to cite a work that escapes this trap convincingly. This chapter does not try to escape independence in order to trace the lineage, and pursue the story, of the territorial Partition of the subcontinent in August 1947. Instead, it actively engages with the available histories of independence of the subcontinent to glean out of them significant political moments and events that affected the relationship between territory and people in many different ways. In the main, the attempt at history that follows is woven around the roles of the British Government in India, the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League. Conceding the primacy of these three actors, however, does not imply denying the possible influences that remain on the margins of Partition story-telling but are indispensable for the present task. The chapter ensures their inclusion. No territorial history of the subcontinent can avoid Curzon and hence, it begins with his role in the first Partition of Bengal. Of the many effects of Bengal's Partition, the three most relevant are then considered. This is followed by discussions of the two-nation thesis and the individuals who offered territorial cloak to this idea. Constitutional reforms significantly affected, and were affected by, the communal problem after the first decade of the 20th century. The narrative picks up important moments in the subcontinent's constitutional history of this period and, in the light of demands for territorial separation and its opposition, proceeds to engage with the tumultuous and decisive years of 1940s. A brief

account of the drawing of the final South Asian boundaries through the Radcliffe Awards precedes the conclusion of this chapter.

Curzon's Geopolitics: First Partition of Bengal

Impetuous isn't quite the word to describe George Nathaniel Curzon. He was perhaps its arrogant superlative. One of his biographers, Harold Nicolson, wrote: "Curzon was hard in the wrong places and soft in the wrong places" (cited in Goudie 1980: 203). As perhaps elsewhere, this also applied to some of Curzon's policies as British India's viceroy from January 1899 to November 1905. A confirmed Russophobe, Curzon modified the Forward policy on the northwestern front after the boundary with Afghanistan was settled in 1893. He wrote in June 1899:

> It is of course inevitable that in the course of time the whole Waziri country up to the Durand Line will come more and more under our control... My desire is to bring it about by gradual degrees and above all without the constant aid and pressure of British troops (quoted in Fraser-Tytler 1962: 190).

His desire could not stop British punitive expeditions in the tribal region. He initiated internal reorganisation of the region aimed at apparently peaceful penetration of the tribal areas and gradual extension of control over the tribes lying between the British administered border and the Durand Line. The formation of Gilgit Agency (in 1889) and later the inauguration of the North West Frontier Province were a part of this policy. He suggested an advance on Kandahar when the Afghan Amir Habibullah insisted on arms subsidies without renegotiating the Durand agreement as the viceroy desired. Louis Dane's successful mission to Kabul in 1904 averted the brewing crisis. Ultimately, this modified Forward policy too backfired causing the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919. We've already seen at some length his more successful policy towards Tibet and the Younghusband expedition. Under his influence, although hesitantly, London declared a Monroe Doctrine of sorts warning other powers to stay away from the Arabian Gulf. Curzon himself led the flag-waving naval flotilla to the region in November 1903 (Bose 2006: 36).

Curzon had a remarkable gift of riling his masters and peers alike. Unsurprisingly, his administration's intense activity and stress on efficiency – which was, in his view, synonymous with the 'contentment of the governed' – enraged Indian nationalists and enabled a new phase in the history of Indian nationalism. The petitioning Congress was going through a lean phase leaving the radicals within dissatisfied. Sarkar (1983) highlights three successive measures of the Curzon administration that fuelled confrontation between the viceroy and the nationalist intelligentsia: changes in Calcutta Corporation in 1899, the Universities Act of 1904, and the Partition of Bengal in 1905. The first two are not relevant to our discussion. We cannot proceed without engaging with the third.

The province of Bengal was unwieldy: it comprised present-day West Bengal, Bangladesh, Bihar, Chhota Nagpur and Orissa. The undivided province with an area of 189000 square miles and a population of about 79 million was said to have become too huge to be governed, efficiently. Various permutations of redrawn territorial and administrative boundaries for the province had been suggested since 1842, the year Assam came under direct British administration (Nanda 1998: 43). After the Revolt of 1857, the 1860s saw stray proposals to cut Bengal's size resurface. Accordingly, Assam and Sylhet were separated in 1874 and in 1896-97 the Assam Chief Commissioner William Ward proposed transferring Chittagong, Dacca and Mymensing to his province. Ward's proposal was revised and reformed by Bengal Lt. Governor Andrew Fraser in a note of March 28, 1903. Curzon accepted the same in a minute on the territorial redistribution of India dated June 1, 1903. After being suitably edited for public consumption the Home Secretary Herbert Risley announced the same through a letter on December 3, 1903. Risley's rationale? Relief of Bengal and improvement of Assam. Between December 1903 and the formal announcement of July 16, 1905, Fraser, Risley and Curzon transformed the transfer plan of a few districts into one of a full-scale partition. The new province of 'East Bengal and Assam', and the Partition of Bengal, came into effect on October 16, 2005 (Sarkar 1983: 105-108; Nanda 1998: 42-45).

The first Partition of Bengal was a decision in haste. Like those of his many Tory predecessors Curzon's act was also influenced by electoral machinations in Britain. Elections were due in London and a Liberal government in power may very likely have jettisoned the plan. He hastened his act. He had, meanwhile, been involved in a bitter dispute with his Commander-in-Chief Kitchener. The clash spiralled out of control bringing the viceroy's tenure to an abrupt end. A month after the Partition came into effect Curzon sailed from India.

It was perhaps not entirely coincidental that Curzon, who in retrospect shows persistent knack of intervening in the geographical peripheries of the subcontinent, was also a fairly accomplished geographer. (Certainly the only British geographer to have been so significant to the history of the British empire.) The official rationale for Partition does not obliterate the political advantages the empire sought to derive from it. This was a preemptive move to disrupt the growing nationalist opposition led by Hindu middle classes. Curzon stated the objective without mincing words to his secretary of state:

> The Bengalis, who like to think themselves a nation, and who dream of a future when the English will have been turned out, and a Bengali Babu will be installed in Government House, Calcutta, of course bitterly resent any disruption that will be likely to interfere with the realisation of this dream. If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now, we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again; and *you will be cementing and solidifying, on the eastern flank of India, a force already formidable, and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in the future* (cited in Chatterjee 1997: 28) (emphasis added).

Again, speaking at Dacca in February 1904, he pointed out to a largely Muslim audience that Partition "would invest the Muhammadans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussulman viceroys and kings" (cited in Chatterjee 1997: 28). And here is Risley, the knighted home secretary and an ethnographer of some repute, in a note of February 1904:

> Bengal united is a power; Bengal divided will pull in different ways. That is perfectly true and one of the merits of the scheme... One of our main objects is to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule (cited in Sarkar 1983: 107).

Curzon's successor Lord Minto also believed in the objective of Partition: "Partition", he said, "should and must be maintained since the diminution of the power of Bengali political agitation will assist to remove a serious cause of anxiety." What was that anxiety? In Minto's words: "It is the growing power of a population with great intellectual gifts and a talent for making itself heard (which) is not unlikely to influence public opinion at home most mischievously" (both cited in Chakrabarty 2004: 87).

Curzon – who, according to Nicolson, had the mentality of an adolescent and whose "character became ossified at the age of nineteen" – had not anticipated the level of popular opposition to perhaps the most important political event on the subcontinent since the Revolt of 1857. The history of this agitation is well-recorded and its reproduction here would serve little purpose. It lasted six years, spreading from Bengal over to Punjab, Madras and Maharashtra. It turned violent at places and in phases to stir popular imagination against the divisive act. *Swadeshi swaraj*, Boycott, National Education and Passive Resistance gained prominence. As we shall see, some of these had a prominent role to play in shaping a national territorial vision.

The Enduring Consequences

George V announced the revocation of the Partition at the Delhi Durbar in December 1911. Curzon's act had become so unpopular that maintaining it would have brought certain demise of the empire, or at any rate may have weakened it considerably. But three very important developments took place in the crucial six years between October 1905 and December 1911. Muslim elite politics in the new province, or at least a section of it, had begun to thrive on the British assurances of more jobs and better days for Muslims – a dream that had much animated the knighted Sayyed Ahmed Khan in last quarter of the 19th century. It was here, in Dacca (Dhaka), that within a year of the Partition the All India Muslim League was founded by a group of big landlords, ex-bureaucrats, and other upper class Muslims like the Aga Khan and Mohsin-ul-Mulk. It was formed at the instance of Nawab Salimullah. The League's Constitution, adopted in December 1907, restricted its membership to 400 men of property and influence (Akbar 2003: 25). The Lt. Governor of East Bengal and Assam Bampfyld Fuller was actively

playing majority Muslims against Hindus in the new province. Meanwhile, a predominantly United Provinces and Aligarh-based elite Muslim group had organised the Simla Deputation to Minto on October 1, 1906. It pleaded for separate Muslim electorates and representation in excess of numerical strength in view of "the value of the contribution" Muslims were making "to the defence of the Empire" (Sarkar 1983: 140). The same group soon took over the Muslim League. While organising the Muslim League, the Aga Khan had assured the viceroy's personal secretary on October 29, 1906 that he had instructed Mohsin-ul-Mulk "not to move in any matter before first finding out if the step to be taken has the full approval of the Government privately" (quoted in Sarkar 1983: 141).

Within three years of the Simla Deputation and Muslim League's founding, the Morley-Minto Reforms were announced by the British Government in India in 1909. Formal elections were introduced for the first time. Among its other provisions the most important was the introduction of separate electorates through which Muslim voters were put in separate constituencies from which only Muslims could stand as candidates and for which only Muslims could vote. Out of 27 elected seats in the Imperial Council, no less than eight were reserved for the Muslim separate electorate. The income qualification for Muslim voters was considerably lower than for Hindus (Chandra et al. 1989: 419; Sarkar 1983: 140). The Reforms were partly a balancing measure for the Partition of 1905. The government was also aiming at rallying the Congress Moderates towards itself after the Surat split of 1907. But it cannot be denied that its chief aim was to institutionalise the schism between the two communities which had begun to grow after the Partition. This was, in Sarkar's words, a 'remarkable success' for the Simla Deputation group and the Muslim League (1983: 140). The Reforms offered concessions to Muslims of which Hindu leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya were extremely critical. The founding of Punjab Hindu Sabha by U.N. Mukerji and Lal Chand in 1909 was closely related to these concessions. The Punjab Hindu Sabha was succeeded by All India Hindu Mahasabha in 1915.

The reunion of Bengal was a rude shock for the Muslim political elite. As a sop to the Muslims the government announced that Delhi would be the new imperial capital. It did not work. The 1910s saw Muslim League accepting the Congress demand for self-government and the famous League-Congress Lucknow Pact. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, then dubbed the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, was instrumental in achieving it. The Indian Council Act, as the Morley-Minto Reforms was officially called, was totally revised within a decade. And Hindu communalism had yet to find its potent ideologues. It would still take some time for the 'two-nation' thesis to get territorialised and gain currency. Yet, the territorial Partition of Bengal was an act of immense significance for the politics of the subcontinent. Whether all or some or any of it was carefully devised or not, the fact remains that the formation of the Muslim League, the Punjab Hindu Sabha and the divisive provisions of the Act of 1909 had fundamentally altered the conception of nationalism in British India. Partha Chatterjee's analysis of the Partition of Bengal is instructive:

> Even as the project of imagining a nation into existence got underway, it found itself on a political field where contending strategies could be devised to contest or disrupt that project by enabling the rival imagining of rival nations, one on a principle of linguistic nationalism, the other that of religious nationalism (1997: 28)

It was the force of linguistic nationalism that guided the successful opposition to Bengal's Partition. The reunion, in fact, was a temporary triumph of linguistic nationalism over religious-territorial separatism. The Partition of Bengal, however, permanently complicated this picture. The Partition was essentially a territorial separation of two religious communities, Hindus and Muslims. Even though undone in six years, Bengal's Partition firmly represented identification of a religious group with a territory, and, more importantly, it augmented the possibility of achieving a religion-based territorial nation-state. It is must not be entirely coincidental that the period of Bengal's first Partition gave birth to forces that would, 42 years later, lead to the second Partition of Bengal and the subcontinent.

Communalising Territory: the Two-Nation Thesis

Scholars have offered various definitions of communalism. Recently Gyanendra Pandey (2006) has even suggested that we must seriously consider the idea of prefixing communalism with a 'Post'. Strong disagreements exist over its genesis, but all these need not detain us here. We are interested in the polarisation of subcontinent's politics brought about by communalism. In marked contrast to the communal solidarity showed in the 1910s with the Lucknow Pact, during the Rowlatt Acts agitation, and in the Khilafat and the Non-Cooperation Movements, the 1920s witnessed communal antagonism at an unprecedented scale (see Page 2002: 73-139; Chandra et al. 1989: 427). *Tabligh* and *Tanzeem* emerged in response to *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan*. Incessant riots in various parts of the subcontinent and increasing mutual distrust had made the inter-communal atmosphere stifling. Individuals of mind soon busied themselves with efforts to territorialise the communal problem. It was not that such efforts were not made before. Sayyed Jamal ad Din Afghani, during the 19th century, had militantly opposed the British rule in India citing ideals of Islamic polity and its territorial dimensions. But whereas in the past these intellectual efforts were directed against the British rule, they were now chiefly aimed at achieving two goals. One, identifying the territorial frontiers of their respective communities. Two, securing philosophical, historical and other justifications to exclude the other community's claim or to make one's own territorial claim soundly rooted. One such effort was V.D. Savarkar's *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, a pamphlet published in 1923. The work is very instructive, quite literally. It inextricably links the identity of a Hindu individual with a certain defined geographical expanse stretching from the Indus to the seas. He offered a Fatherland-Holyland (*pitribhumi-punyabhumi*) equation which roughly argued that only those whose forefathers belonged to this land, and who find themselves connected to this land and whose religion developed in this land could consider it their own (see Basu et al. 1993: 8; Lancaster 2003). For a self-described atheist this was some serious reductionism. While the genesis of the two nation-nation thesis itself is contested, its intellectual territorialisation is evident here. A year later, the Hindu Mahasabha leader Lala Lajpat Rai offered a territorial scheme for Muslims. "Under my scheme", he wrote in *The Tribune* of December 14, 1924,

> the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier; (2) Western Punjab (3) Sindh and (4) Eastern Bengal. If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. *It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India* (cited in Noorani 2001) (emphasis added).

This was 16 years before an event which we will soon turn to. We have already discussed the genesis of Hindu Mahasabha. Savarkar offered more in the 1930s. In 1937, he said that Muslims "want to brand the forehead of Hindudom and other non-Muslim sections in Hindustan with a stamp of self-humiliation and Muslim domination" and "to reduce the Hindus to the position of helots *in their own land*". For some inexplicable reason Savarkar found his apprehensions come true in a year's time. He wrote in 1938: "We Hindus are *already* reduced to be veritable helots *throughout our land*" (cited in Chandra et al. 1989: 437) (emphases added). The most vituperative ideologue of the Hindu Right arguably did not see any difference between a Spartan serf and an Indian Hindu. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, founded in 1925, had also branched out by the mid-1930s. Its second family head Golwalkar's *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*, published in 1939, deepened the Hindu-Muslim chasm. Accepting the Muslim demands, the booklet argued, would shatter the Hindu national life. His advice to Muslims and other religious minorities was categorical, to put it understatedly. To summarise the oft-quoted passage, he argued that India's non-Hindus must either adopt Hindu culture, language, religion and its land or "they must cease to be foreigners" or may stay in the country subordinated, claiming and deserving nothing – no preferential treatment or citizenship rights.

Till the second half of the 19th century, that Hindus and Muslims were separate communities living in a shared land was never in any doubt, nor was it a matter of intense political discord. Muslims had gradually lost their Indian empire to the British and the formal dissolution of the Mughal empire after the Revolt had further weakened the community's position. While the Wahabis and religious zealots like Afghani proposed a return of Islamic rule, the educationist and politician Sayyed Ahmed Khan (also knighted) asked Indian Muslims to resort to modern education if they ever were to catch up with Hindus. He was sceptical over the prospects of the British granting representative

constitutional institutions to Indians and exhorted Muslims to stay away from Congress agitators – 'the Bengalis', as he called them (Nanda 1998: 75-82). This isn't the place to recount his political views, suffice it to say that for him Muslims and Hindus in India constituted two different nations:

> The proposals of the Congress are exceedingly inexpedient for a country which is inhabited by two different nations... Now suppose that all the English were to leave India, then who would be the rulers of India? Is it possible that under these circumstances two nations – Hindu and Mussulman – should sit on the same throne and remain in equal power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down (cited in Ispahani 1970: 335).

Sayyed Ahmed is a controversial figure in the subcontinent divided by political boundaries due to his views of Hindu-Muslim communities, the role of Aligarh in the Pakistan movement and Pakistani scholars' claims over his legacy. But it is perhaps safe to argue that his group's pleadings for Muslim representation through nomination and his political heir Mohsin-ul-Mulk's role in Simla Deputation and the Muslim League were directly related.

During a visit to the Aligarh Muslim University in September 2005 the present researcher, interacting with a small group of Left-wing student activists, heard the following couplet used frequently by student-politicians of the University to garner votes:

dasht toh dasht, dariya bhi na chode hum ne
behr-e-zulmaat mein dauda diye ghode hum ne

(Let alone desert land we waded into water;
We galloped into open seas even as a starter.)

The aspiring politicians, one was informed, use these lines to recount Islam's startling and fearless conquest of a greater part of the world and, in turn, stir the young minds by poetic invocation of political nostalgia. It seemed as if almost nothing had changed in a century's time.

The poet-philosopher Mohammad Iqbal wrote his most famous work *Shiqva* (Remonstrance or Complaint) in 1909 of which the couplet quoted above is a part. He addressed it to God, bemoaning the fate of Muslims everywhere, particularly in the subcontinent, and metaphorically confronting Islam's dilemmas. It was a lament and a challenge:

hai baja shewa-e-taslim mein mashhoor hain hum
kissa-e-dard sunaate hain ke majboor hain hum

(We won renown for submitting to your will – and it is so;
We speak out now, we are compelled to repeat our tale of woe.)

Iqbal asked Allah why He was unfaithful to Muslims when they remained faithful to Him:

rehmatein hain teri aghiyaar ke kaashaanon par
barq girti hai toh bechaare mussalmaanon par

(Your blessings are showered on homes of unbelievers, strangers all;
Only on the poor Muslim, Your wrath like lightening falls.)

(Translations by Khushwant Singh, cited in Akbar 2002: 198-199.)

Iqbal had meditated long enough in Islamic theology to remember the Verse 11 of Surah 13, Al Rad or The Thunder of the *Holy Quran*: "Never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves."[8] Hence, he wrote God's answer – *Javaab-e-Shiqva* – too. It took the Muslim community to task:

firqabandi hai kahin aur kahin zaatein hain
kya zamaane mein panapne ko yahi baatein hain

(Divided you are in groups, as well as caste and creed
Is this on earth the only way to survive and succeed?)

---

[8] Sincere thanks to Irfan Ullah Farooqui for pointing out the Verse and its significance in debates on Islamic polity.

And questioned the community's internal divisions:

yun toh saiyyad bhi ho, mirza bhi ho, afghan bhi ho
tum sabhi kuch ho bataao toh mussalmaan bhi ho

(You are Syed, you are Mirza, Afghan in origin
Everything you are, but are you Muslim in religion?)

How then could there be unity?

qaum mazhab se hai, mazhab jo nahin tum bhi nahin
jazb baaham jo nahin, mehfil-e-anjum bhi nahin

(From religion is community, no religion, no community
If no natural concordat, there is then no unity.)

(Translations from Mehmood 2003: 265-271.)

The French playwright Romain Rolland once said that a thought that does lead to action is a betrayal. A life of meditation did not satisfy Iqbal. But as one of his biographers Iqbal Singh (1997) points out, the poet-philosopher was seldom successful as a man of deeds. Indeed, it is quite ironical, even if it can be established definitively, that Iqbal is credited with having offered a philosophy of polity that led to the creation of Pakistan. Despite his benefactor Fazl-i-Hussian's continuous effort to secure an influential political position for him, Iqbal had almost perfected the art of tactlessness while dealing with important political occasions like the First Round Table Conference, among many others (see esp. Iqbal Singh 1997: 73-96). Many historians trace the genesis of the Pakistan territorial scheme to Iqbal's famous speech at the Allahabad session of the Muslim League in 1930. Such territorial schemes were floated by Hindu communalists before 1930 as we have seen above. Yet, Iqbal was not only perhaps the first Muslim to suggest territorial dimensions of a Muslim state, he was also the first to lend intellectual gravity to the proposition. Here is the passage from the speech in contention:

> I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, and the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of North-West India (cited in Singh 1997: 89-90).

A few clarifications are in order. The context of the speech reveals that Iqbal was not supporting a territorial partition but advocating the consolidation of these areas into a weak Indian federation. The absence of East Bengal should be noted, so should be the omission of the term 'Pakistan'. Moreover, in letter to Edward Thompson, he had clarified that he did not want a separate Muslim state (Datta 2002: 5036).

A Cambridge University student Rehmat Ali's Pakistan Declaration, *Now or Never: Are We to Live or Perish Forever?*, published in 1933, coined the term "Pakstan" (sic) which delineated "five Northern units of India, viz.: Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan" as comprising a Muslim nation. Two years later, in 1935, he wrote another pamphlet. The reference to a relationship between a population and territory was categorical:

> We thirty millions (Muslims) constitute about one-tenth of whole Muslim world. The total area of the five units comprising PAKSTAN, which are our homelands, is four times that of Italy, three times that of Germany and twice that of France; and our population seven times that of the Commonwealth of Australia, four times that of the Dominion of Canada, twice that of Spain, and equal to France and Italy considered individually.

Despite Iqbal's speech and Rehmat Ali's rather emotional plea for its realisation, Pakistan had been dismissed by many, including Muslim delegates at the Round Table Conference, as a 'students' scheme'. It was not until March 1940, when the Muslim League passed what has been called the 'Pakistan Resolution' that Muslim separateness turned into Muslim separatism. But before we begin our engagement with the tumultuous events of the 1940s, a very brief survey of politics of constitutional developments in British India is in order. Especially because it holds the key to understanding the decisive rise of territorial separatism on the subcontinent.

Empire's Liberalism: Divide and Rule and Quit

Any devolution or delegation of power in the subcontinent was virtually unthinkable during the latter half of the 19th century, when Victorian Britain was at the height of its power across the globe. However, the Act of 1909 made a shy beginning towards that process. The First World War and its immediate aftermath brought upon dramatic changes in Indian life (Sarkar 1983: 165). Constitutional reforms were one of them. The Secretary of State Montagu declared in the House of Commons on August 20, 1917 that the British policy in India would henceforth have as its overall objective "the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". This was followed by the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918 and the Government of India Act of 1919. Dyarchy and a set of vague liberal promises involving little novel action was the sum of the Act. Simultaneously, however, the curtailing Rowlatt Acts were also introduced. The Gandhian opposition to the Rowlatt Acts and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre followed. Jinnah aligned with Gandhi to secure qualified acceptance of the Reforms. During the latter's Non-Cooperation Movement Jinnah even visited England to lobby for a constitutional response to Gandhi's activities. Having performed a broker's role Jinnah, the constitutionalist, returned empty-handed. When Gandhi suspended the Movement (claiming that *Swaraj* stank in his nostrils) Jinnah and Malaviya tried to convince Gandhi to accept peace with the Government. A reticent Gandhi left Jinnah exasperated (Page 2002: 106-108).

Jinnah, as a leader of the Independent party, cooperated with Motilal Nehru's Swarajists after 1923. The two parties mooted a National Demand, calling for provincial autonomy and responsibility in the central government. In London the new Secretary of State Lord Oliver made it plain that he was not prepared to go any further than the position taken by the British Government in India (Page 2002: 111). Soon Jinnah began efforts to revive the dormant Muslim League, still hoping to strengthen the chances of realising the National Demand. A session of Muslim League at Lahore was organised and its most important resolution looked forward to a 'Federal Government at the Centre'; demanded that no measure of territorial redistribution should effect Muslim majorities in

Punjab, Bengal and the Frontier; and argued that representation was to be by population "except that the very small minorities may be given representation in excess of their numerical proportion" in some specific cases (cited in Page 2002: 113). A week after the Lahore Session, Nehru and Jinnah were invited to attend the Reforms Enquiry Committee by the British government. The Swarajist Executive prevented Nehru from attending but Jinnah was under no such compulsion. At its completion, Jinnah, along with other leaders, produced a Minority Report which condemned dyarchy unequivocally, demanded provincial autonomy and responsibility in central government and claimed that communal tension was a phenomenon of restricted importance. Their chief concern, however, was for advance at the Centre, which the government had managed to avoid in the Act of 1919 by conceding demands for the provinces. The demand, predictably, was not accepted. But the Report did stress the dangers of such centrifugalism. This was an important event on the road to division of the subcontinent. As Page notes: "This was perhaps the first time that Partition had been foreshadowed in constitutional terms" (2002: 118). The Government of India Act of 1935 too only conceded provincial autonomy. The absence of any Indian government to replace the Raj at the time of the transfer of power made territorial secession wieldier than it may have otherwise been.

The Indian Statutory Commission, also known as the Simon Commission, was constituted in November 1927 in accordance with provisions of the Act of 1919. The absence of Indian members in the Commission resulted in its virtually all-parties boycott. The Indian nationalists proposed to come up with a Constitution of their own. Meanwhile, a group of Muslim leaders assembled in Delhi in 1927 under Jinnah's leadership to offer the 'Delhi Proposals'. Its four basic demands were: constitution of Sind as a separate province (from Bombay), introduction of reforms in North West Frontier and Balochistan and treatment of the former on the same footing as others provinces, reservation of seats for Muslims in Bengal and Punjab in proportion to their population, and 33 percent reserved seats for Muslims in the central legislature. Some Muslim leaders were willing to forego their demands for separate electorates if these proposals were accepted, while others like the Aga Khan and Mohammad Shafi were unyielding. The Congress constitutional proposals came in the form of the Nehru Report.

Asking for a dominion status for India, the Nehru Report conceded Sind's separation if it was financially viable, proposed the treatment of NWFP as a separate province through constitutional reforms, ruled out separate communal electorates and proposed a federal structure with residuary powers with the centre. The Report was put for approval at an All-Party Convention in Calcutta in December 1928. Calcutta witnessed a conundrum of claims and oppositions. Jinnah and his followers were willing to accept the Report if two of the provisions of the Delhi Proposals (those not conceded by the Report) and a fresh proposal of vesting residuary powers with the provinces were accepted. Hindu leaders objected to proposals on Sind and the NWFP while the Congress leadership was against a weak centre. A dismayed Jinnah called it the 'parting of the ways'. Eleven years after Woodrow Wilson it was Jinnah turn to offer his Fourteen Points Plan. This combined the Delhi Proposals and demanded the continuation of separate electorates and reservation of seats for Muslims in government services and self-governing bodies. The Congress rejected these too.

The three Round Table Conferences, which were held to resolve communal differences and further enquire into constitutional reforms in the face of Simon Commission's failure, could not reverse the path to separation. The Congress did not participate in the First Conference. Gandhi claimed he alone represented all Indians including Muslims and the depressed classes during the Second. The failure of the Second Round Table to produce constitutional solution to the communal problem provided an excuse for the Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, who claimed himself the friend of Indians, to announce the suitably-titled Communal Awards. The Muslim League, with some reservations, accepted the Award; while the Congress, given that it had conceded separate Muslim electorates in 1916 Lucknow Pact, "decided neither to reject it nor to accept it" (Chandra et al. 1989: 291). With only 46 delegates (as opposed to 112 in 1931) attending the Third Conference it is perhaps fair to say that it was a formal and an unimportant event. Any real Indian participation in the constitutional structure soon to be announced had ceased by 1932. When in August 1935 the Government of India Act was announced it was, in a certain sense, the culmination of a controversial process that began with the Simon Commission eight years ago.

Detailed provisions of the Act of 1935 cannot be discussed here. Those germane to our story included the continuation of separate electorates, creation of Sind as a separate province, reforms in the NWFP, reserved seats for Muslims in the ratio of 49 percent in the Punjab and 48 percent in Bengal. This longest Bill the British Parliament had ever passed was opposed by nearly all sections of Indian politics, including the Congress and the Muslim League. Nehru called it a 'Charter of Slavery', and hoped that a Constitution for India would be elected on adult franchise and mass basis (Nanda 1970: 149). For the Muslim League the Federal part of the Act was 'most reactionary', but it decided to engage with the provincial part "for what it is worth" (Anita Inder Singh 2002: 2). The elections held under the Act in the winter of 1936-37 – with the strength of the electorate up from 7 million in 1920 to some 36 million representing 30 percent of the population of the subcontinent – proved decisive in many ways to the Muslim League's Pakistan Resolution in March 1940.

Equality and the Pakistan Demand

Jinnah's return to India on the insistence of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1936 to lead the Muslim League's participation in the provincial elections began another phase in the politics of the subcontinent. It turned divisive after the Congress' fairly emphatic win. Virtually all histories of the Partition of 1947 have explored the consequences of the elections and Congress policy towards the Muslim league in its aftermath. We'll do well to keep it brief. Congress won 711 out of 1585 provincial assembly seats with absolute majorities in five out of eleven provinces in Bihar, Madras, Orissa, Central Provinces and United Provinces. It contested on 58 out of 482 reserved Muslim seats and won 26. The Muslim League's performance was near disastrous. It failed to win a single seat in the NWFP, won two out of 84 and three out of 33 reserved constituencies in the Punjab and Sind respectively (Sarkar 1983: 349). For a party which claimed to be the sole representative of subcontinent's Muslims this was a humiliating performance. Jinnah offered to form coalition government with the Congress. But the Congress was clinical in arguing the winner-takes-all rule of the Westminster model.

A less than successful politician till now, Jinnah was still a brilliant lawyer and knew the art of using concepts the British had introduced with tact. When, in March 1937, Nehru remarked that the Congress and the British government were the only two parties in India, Jinnah was quick to claim that the Muslim League was the third and rightful equal partner of the Congress. Equality – this concept Jinnah used to direct Muslim League politics thereon. Equal rights of Muslims, he claimed, could only be achieved by organising under the Muslim League to achieve equality of power. At the League's Lucknow Session in October 1937 he insisted that "an honourable settlement can only be achieved between equals" and demanded of Nehru that Congress must recognise the League "on a footing of perfect equality" (Moore 1983: 532-536).[9] The Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference held in October 1938 foreshadowed Muslim thinking. The chairman of the Conference's reception committee, Abdoola Haroon said:

> We have nearly arrived at the parting of the ways and unless the minority problem is solved to the satisfaction of all, it will be impossible for anybody to save India from being divided into Hindu India and Muslim India both placed under separate federations (cited in Zaidi 1970: 260).

The Sind Conference passed a resolution asking the Muslim League to "review and revise the entire conception of what should be the suitable constitution for India which will secure honourable and legitimate status to them (the separate Muslim nation)" (Moore 1983: 537-538).

When, after the outbreak of the Second World War, the government made India an Allied participant without consulting its leaders, the Congress ministries resigned in November 1939. Jinnah called it 'a day of deliverance' for Muslims from Congress rule. Meanwhile, since March 1939 the Muslim League had begun considering various constitutional and territorial schemes for the Muslims of the subcontinent. In light of Iqbal and Rehmat Ali's schemes, other possibilities were offered. Among these was the Aligarh Scheme of Zafrul Hasan and Husain Qadri suggesting four independent states of

[9] Jinnah would not fail to invoke this concept in his speech to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly ten years later. On August 11, 1947, he said, "... we are starting a state with no discrimination" and that in time "Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims ... in the political sense as citizens of the nation" (cited in Akbar 2003: 34).

Pakistan, Bengal, Hyderabad and Hindustan (Sarkar 1983: 378). Syed Abdul Latif suggested two nations within a common motherland under a single Federal authority (Moore 1983: 539). The Punjab Unionist premier Sikandar Hayat Khan suggested a very weak, three-tier federation (Sarkar 1983: 378). Interestingly, the federal aspect of the Act of 1935, which were taking eternity to come into effect and caused anxiety for the Muslim League, were suspended during the War. The stage was set, so to speak, for the Lahore Session of the Muslim League.

> 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 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).

The Pakistan Resolution – the first resolution placed on the second day of the League Session on March 23, 1940 – was territorially vague, imprecise in its demand and was deliberately equivocal.[10] But interestingly, it suggested that the Muslim League was still willing to work along constitutional lines if this demand was met. It was here that Jinnah lent publicly his weight to the nature of the communal problem, claiming in the speech that echoed and bettered Rehmat Ali, that Hindus and Muslims were not just different religious communities, but different social orders. He even internationalised the issue:

> The problem in India is not of an intercommunal but manifestly of an international character and it must be treated as such. So long as this basic and fundamental truth is not realised, any constitution that may be built will result in disaster and will prove destructive and harmful not only to the Mussalmans, but also to the British and Hindus. If the British Government are really in earnest and sincere to secure peace and happiness of the people of this subcontinent, the only course open to us all is to allow the major nations separate homelands by dividing India into 'autonomous national states'(cited in Moore 1983: 545).

[10] Reactions of some of the Indian political leaders to the Resolution were following: for Gandhi, the two-nation thesis was "an untruth"; Rajagopalachari called it a "medieval conception"; "all the old problems ... pale into insignificance before the latest stand taken by the Muslim League leaders" said Nehru. "There is no question of settlement or negotiations now"; Azad described it "meaningless and absurd" (Nanda 1970:166-167).

Jinnah, it should be noted, still stressed upon a constitutional solution to the problem of the separate Muslim nation. The British role in egging the Muslim League was also significant. The Muslim League, and more so the Muslim elite throughout the subcontinent, had been a loyal British ally since Sayyed Ahmed's days. This was an important factor in shaping the government's attitude towards the League's demand. In March 1939, the Secretary of State Zetland and Under-secretary Muirhead had suggested two prominent League leaders that the British would 'ultimately concede' the proposal for a separate Muslim state in the north west and north east of India if it was put forward (Nanda 1970: 167). The Viceroy Linlithgow told Jinnah six weeks before the Lahore Session that "If he and his friends wanted to secure that the Muslim case should not go by default in the UK, it was really essential that they should formulate their plan in the near future" (Uma Kaura quoted in Sarkar 1983: 379).

The March to August 1947

In contrast to the slow and cumbersome political maneuverings of the previous three decades of Hindu-Muslim politics, the period from March 1940 to August 1947 saw relatively fewer, but extremely crucial political events. With Winston Churchill's Conservative government in London and Linlithgow as his viceroy in British India, Indian nationalists had little hopes of gaining further ground on route to freedom. Pressures of the War and encroaching Japanese forces from the east resulted in the dispatch of Stafford Cripps (another knight) to India in March 1942. His Draft Declaration conceded that India could frame a constitution through a constituent assembly after the War, offered Dominion Status to India and individual provinces were given the right to not join it. Cripps overran his brief, against Churchill's wishes, to secure Congress approval leading to ambiguities and much misunderstanding. More relevant, the clause related to provinces being free to not join the new union after the war encouraged the Muslim League for it suggested the possibility of forming a separate union. In other words, it was a tacit acceptance of the Muslim League's demand for territorial separation. The Cripps Mission was a failure. Soon the Congress launched, under Gandhi's leadership, the Quit India Movement. "Leave India to God or anarchy",

Gandhi urged the British (Sarkar 1983: 388). Gandhi's plea was heard five years later with approximate accuracy.

The government's crackdown on the agitating Congress leaders facilitated a remarkable consolidation of the Muslim League in the areas it demanded for Pakistan. Given that most provincial Congress leaders were in jail, League ministries had been installed in Assam (August 1942), Sind (October 1942), Bengal (March 1943) and the NWFP (May 1943). The Muslim League's own private militia (the volunteer corps), its expanding membership, student movements run from Aligarh and Dacca Universities had all combined in this Congress-less scenario to popularise Pakistan's appeal in Bengal as well as in the Punjab as also in the United Provinces. The history of Muslim League's activities offers the students of political science interesting insights into the process of putting together the paraphernalia of a state with flimsy historical roots.

The new Viceroy Wavell arrived in India in October 1943 and began efforts to set up a provisional government at the centre with Congress-League participation. Gandhi was released from jail in May 1944 and soon proposed talks with Jinnah on the basis of the 'Rajagopalachari formula'.[11] Jinnah reiterated his demand for separation of Assam, Bengal, Punjab, Sind, Balochistan and NWFP in July 1944. He said the formula offered only "a shadow and a husk, a maimed and mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan." The talks, held in September 1944, broke down. With elections staring him in his face Churchill allowed Wavell to resume negotiations with Indian leaders in June 1945. Congress leaders were released and the viceroy proposed setting up an Executive Council, entirely made of Indian members except for the viceroy and the commander in chief. At the Simla Conference the Congress objected to being represented as a party of 'Caste Hindus' and insisted on its right to include members from all communities (including Muslims) among its nominees for the Executive. Jinnah was intransigent in demanding that only

[11] It proposed a post-war commission to demarcate contiguous districts in the north west and north east of India where Muslims had an absolute majority; plebiscite to be held in these areas to decide whether they wanted a separate Pakistan; mutual agreements, in case of separation, on services like defence or communications; and implementation of the scheme only after full transfer of power by the British (Sarkar 1983: 415).

Muslim League had the right to nominate Muslim members. Simla Conference too broke down.

The inauguration of Clement Attlee's Labour government brought the Cabinet Mission to India. The Mission – comprising the brilliant lawyer and veteran of 1942, Stafford Cripps, Secretary of State Pethick Lawrence and A. V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty – negotiated from March 24 to June 1946 on two issues of an interim government and framing of a new constitution. With an impressive electoral performance in the provincial election, a more representative Jinnah vetoed all proposals by insisting on Pakistan. The negotiations stalled. When they resumed, the Mission offered two proposals: a loose, three-tier confederal structure in which the Muslims would have the chance to dominate north eastern and north western provinces of a still-united country; or a truncated Pakistan, as the logic of religious self-determination, the Mission argued, would separate Hindu-majority West Bengal (including Calcutta) and Sikh and Hindu-dominated Ambala and Jullundur divisions of Punjab. Bengal and Punjab's partitions would be unwise from historical, economic and administrative sense and would still not satisfy the League's demand, it reasoned. Jinnah accepted the former proposal on June 6. The Congress followed on June 24 (Sarkar 1983: 428-432; Singh 2002: 161-175).

Meanwhile, Wavell's efforts to form an interim government had failed after the by-now familiar deadlocks. Jinnah insisted that five Congress Hindus, five League Muslims, one Sikh and one Schedule Caste member should form the interim central government. This was against the Congress' position which was responsible for the Simla breakdown. Wavell, consequently, formed a government of officials alone. But given the turbulent political situation in the country – postal strikes and walkouts were threatened – and the Congress' ability to launch another subcontinent-wide stir which he could not control, he tried desperately to induct its representatives in the government even if it meant the League had to stay out. The result was a Congress-dominated interim government, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, sworn in on September 2, 1946. After both parties accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan it seemed that territorial Partition could be avoided. It was not to be. For Nehru, in a press conference in July, stated that the

Congress would not consider itself bound by any prior agreement in the forthcoming constituent assembly which would draft the new constitution.[12] The League had agreed to join the assembly only if all parties were bound by the Cabinet Mission agreements. The ongoing disappointment of the Interim Government experience and this statement of the new Congress President infuriated Jinnah. Both the British and the Congress had held pistol at his head, he said. "Today we also have forged a pistol and are in a position to use it ... This day *we bid goodbye to constitutional methods*", he fumed (Lapping 1985: 67; also see, Singh 2002: 179-202) (emphasis added).

The League announced August 16, 1946 as the Direct Action Day. Violence – once it erupted in Calcutta on 16-19 August – did not stop. Bombay, Bihar and, by the summer of 1947, the Punjab had come under its grip. Each renewed bout of communal violence justified, for the Muslim League, the two-nation thesis. Independence and Partition flamed it further. The erosion of colonial power that had begun nearly a decade ago had reached its climactic stage. Wavell grasped the implications of this violence and sent to London a withdrawal plan, called the 'breakdown plan' in September suggesting total withdrawal by March 1948 (Lapping 1985: 68; Sarkar 1983: 447-448).

Contrary to the hype built around Lord Mountbatten's role in the so-called Transfer of Power from British Crown to the two new states in the subcontinent, one can argue that there was very little Power left to be transferred. Mountbatten's charismatic personality was suitable for the final act of British colonialism on the subcontinent. Indeed, "the formula of freedom-with-Partition was coming to be widely accepted well before Mountbatten took charge" on March 22, 1947 (Sarkar 1983: 447). His contribution was the speed with which the empire folded up, and this too was only partially his achievement. V.P. Menon was instrumental in shaping the June 3 Plan or, appropriately-named, 'Plan Balkan'. Under the Plan, the British authority in the subcontinent would be transferred to India and Pakistan; the provincial assemblies of the Punjab and Bengal were asked to choose between the two new states and if they decided in favour of

[12] The Congress would enter the constituent assembly, he said on July 10, "completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise" (Ahmed 1999:116). Azad would later describe Nehru's statement as one of those unfortunate events which change the course of history.

separation, a boundary commission was in order; a referendum was proposed for the NWFP to decide either for India or for Pakistan. Similar mechanisms were offered to Sind, Balochistan and Sylhet. On June 2, the viceroy presented the Plan to seven leaders whose consent to the plan was necessary. They consented. The All-India Congress Committee ratified it on June 14. Jinnah accepted as a consequence not his once-claimed six provinces but a 'moth-eaten' Pakistan of three provinces and two halves. The Plan became the basis for the India Independence Act, which the Crown ratified on July 18, 1947. It came into effect on August 15, 1947. Attlee had announced June 1948 as the date for British withdrawal; Mountbatten did not see the point of waiting. Thus it was that only two transitional months were offered to divide the army, the civil service and the territory of the subcontinent for two separate nation-states. The responsibility of achieving the last objective was given to an English lawyer, who had never visited the subcontinent, was – like Curzon – a fellow of All Souls, was a knight – like Durand and McMahon – and was equipped with judicial ignorance considered important for a task like this.

Radcliffe's Patchwork

The rich surge of historical literature on the Partition of the subcontinent dries up after the June 3 Plan. The relative scarcity of scholarship devoted to actual Partition – the drawing of boundaries – is perhaps an indicator of the narrative fatigue that Partition begets. A few scholars, who have ventured beyond the June 3 line (or 'Rubicon' as Joya Chatterji (1999) remarks), have impressively shown that the process was as complicated, controversial, and ultimately, incomplete as the Partition itself. We will rely upon some of these works to construct a brief picture that fairly represents the important aspects of this process.

The territorial alternatives to the envisaged Partition could never gain enough popular support. The most promising amongst these was the United Bengal scheme offered by the Bengal Premier H.S. Suhrawardy along with leaders like Sarat Bose and K.S. Roy. Suhrawardy had argued strongly for "an independent, undivided and sovereign Bengal in a divided India as a separate dominion" in April 1947 (Chakrabarty 2004: 132-

153). It could not garner enough popular support. The Punjab was essentially a British-constructed garrison state whose strategic usefulness had led them to gradually conquer it as we have seen. The demographic spread of the province was too complicated for any sustainable territorial plan to emerge, though few demands for a separate Sikh nation were raised. Communal violence of 1946 had taken a heavy toll on the Punjab. Unsurprisingly, and according to the June 3 Plan, all Muslim-majority provinces opted for Pakistan. The *Shahi Jirga* in Balochistan decided for Pakistan along with all 54 members of Quetta municipality. The Sylhet referendum of 6-7 July decided in favour of separation from Assam and union with East Pakistan. The NWFP plebiscite voted nearly 51 percent in favour of Pakistan – a decision of 9.52 percent of the total population of that province. The Bengal Legislative Assembly was provisionally partitioned for voting and on June 20, the majority representatives of Hindu majority districts voted in favour of the Partition of Bengal, while those of the Muslim majority districts voted against it. On this basis, it was taken that the decision for Partition had been established. To simplify, the East Bengal section voted to keep the province united and join the new Pakistan Constituent Assembly, while the West Bengal section voted for Partition and adherence to existing Constituent Assembly. The Punjab voting proceeded on June 23 similarly producing expected results (Kudaisya and Tan 2000: 80-81; Ray 2000: 74-84; Sarkar 1983: 449; Chatterji 1999: 188-189).

Two separate Boundary Commissions – for the Punjab and Bengal – were established after the voting, to divide the two provinces with Radcliffe heading both. Four eminent judges – two nominated by the Congress and two by the League – were to assist the chair. But, as Chatterji (1999) clarifies in the case of Bengal, the setting up of two legislative blocs and the process was such that it had to produce the predictable outcome: "There is little doubt that the result of the voting (Hindus voting aye and Muslims nay) would have been the same" (189). During his first meeting with Mountbatten Radcliffe candidly pointed out that it would take "the most careful arbitrators years to decide a boundary that would certainly cut across homes and populations" (cited in Kudaisya and Tan 2000: 85). He was given five weeks to complete his work. The Commissions' brief was to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of

the two provinces on the basis of ascertaining contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims (not just Hindu), while also taking into account 'other factors'. The 'other factors' were not specified and Radcliffe was to interpret these. In case the 'other factors' and contiguous areas were both bearing on a section of the boundary, it was Radcliffe's discretion to accord precedence to any one of them. There was also considerable ambiguity over what constituted an *area* – a district, a *tehsil* or a *thana*? Radcliffe used everything from larger administrative boundaries to thanas and village boundaries, according to his discretion. To ensure impartiality the viceroy kept his meetings with Radcliffe to a minimum.

The Punjab Boundary Award allotted some 62 percent of the area of undivided Punjab to India, with 55 percent of the population (Chester 2002). It divided Amritsar from Lahore (see Talbot 2007: 151-185) while its decision of conceding Gurdaspur and Ferozepur districts to India (the former offered a passage to Kashmir) left Pakistan bitter. The Bengal Boundary Award carved out a new 4000 kilometre long international border, nearly six times the length of the Punjab boundary. Remarkably, the Bengal border was the longest new international boundary to come into existence during the decolonisation process. It also turned out to be the longest border that India shares with any country (van Schendel 2005: 53). Schendel also clarifies three popular misconceptions with regard to Bengal's second Partition. One, Bengal was not bisected. Instead the Radcliffe Line made the province fall into four large pieces – of East Bengal, West Bengal, the princely state of Tripura which joined India in 1949, and North Bengal comprising the princely state of Cooch Behar that joined India in 1950. Two, it was not a border to Muslim areas as the brief instructed. In fact, for almost three-fifths of its length, the border was not a Muslim/non-Muslim divide. There was no sharp discontinuity between Muslim territory in Pakistan and non-Muslim territory in India. Three, the border did not lead to a Hindu-Muslim territorial divide. Non-Muslims included Christians, tribals and Buddhists. In all, the non-Muslim majority areas on the Indian side of the border were three-fifths Hindu and two-fifths Christian or Buddhists (39-52)

Radcliffe was ready with the two boundary awards by August 12, 1947. But Mountbatten insisted on delaying their publication till after the independence of India and Pakistan. The leaders were shown the awards on the 16th; the people had to wait a day longer. It is difficult to establish, as Chatterji points out, whether "Mountbatten genuinely changed his mind upon realizing late in the day just how unpopular the Award(s) would be, or whether to delay the announcement had been his intention all along" (1999: 195). In any case, it was a trifle odd situation that when both Nehru and Jinnah proclaimed the independence of their respective countries, they were unsure of its territorial dimensions. Perhaps Hasan (2001) best sums up the perplexity produced by the wait of these anticipated territorial entities: "'India' and 'Pakistan' were mere territorial abstractions to people who had no sense of the new frontiers, and little or no knowledge of how Mountbatten's Plan or the Radcliffe Award would change the destinies of millions and tear them apart from their familiar social and cultural moorings" (128).

Wystan Hugh Auden seems undecided whether the division of the subcontinent was for better or for worse. The nature of such a question allows only subjective answers. However, that need not be our immediate concern. The making of the Radcliffe Lines represents a culmination of the imperial policy of turning frontiers into boundaries in South Asia. For this study, the history that begins with the making of the Indo-Afghan frontier culminates in the hasty Partition of British India into a territorially-separated Pakistan and India. This was a complex process and by no means all of it intentional. But the contingencies that enabled the construction of these boundaries do reveal certain characteristics that are germane to understanding territoriality – both as a fundamental concept of international relations theory and as a space-organising strategy in South Asia. We can now turn to these concerns.

Chapter 5: Territoriality Re-Visited

> Space and time are basic categories of human existence. Yet we rarely debate their meanings; we tend to take them for granted, and give them common sense or self-evident attribution.
>
> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*

Writing histories is an exercise in selection. From the facts they choose to the processes they invoke and the outcomes they emphasise, selection remains central to the work of historians. One of the more serious students of history, Charles Maier, has interesting bits to offer. For historians, he writes, "centuries are like Procrustes' famous bed: the Greek innkeeper either stretched his guests if they were too short or chopped them down if they were too long for the sleeping accommodations that were offered" (2000: 813). Maier's point is that Gregorian calculations and divisions of time do not always correspond with, broadly speaking, human history. After all, the 'long 19th century' of historians begins before the year 1800 and ends a decade into the 20th, while the 'short 20th century' ends a decade before the century really ends. Similarly, though one disagrees with some of John Lewis Gaddis' conclusions about Cold War, his claim that "[h]istorians can no more reconstruct what really happened than maps can replicate what is really there" appears agreeable (Gaddis 2000: 27). Indeed, to borrow some more from Gaddis, history as a business of representation aims either at subversion or confirming of prevailing views. In so far as this is concerned, historians are revisionists by nature.

One inserts these caveats foreground the fact that the territorial histories narrated here result from assimilation of selected historical accounts. They have been written with the purpose of gaining from them some conceptual and theoretical insights into territoriality. We proceed towards this task by devising a workable comparison of events, processes and outcomes involved in the drawing of the three boundaries. That the historical accounts presented before are largely events-centric must be emphasised. With events put in some perspective, it becomes advantageous to deal with processes and outcomes. In other words, the idea here is to bring processes and outcomes of these

histories to bear upon the primary concern of this work, which is re-visiting territoriality. Our focus remains on relevant convergences and divergences. Four distinct relationships connecting boundaries and territoriality emerge from the comparison and those, I argue, remain central to understanding territoriality. Before proceeding to discuss them, we survey the existing theoretical and conceptual scholarship on boundaries and territoriality and the various hues in which they appear linked. Since boundaries are modern constructs, understanding them requires paying attention to some assumptions of modern geopolitical imagination. Towards this end, the chapter relies upon insights from Critical Geopolitics offered by John Agnew. Subsequent parts of the chapter outline, in some detail, the four relationships which revolve around the philosophy, theory and practice of Liberalism, machinations of imperial geopolitics, the real and symbolic disruptions boundaries produce on people, and some insights these relations offer to understanding sovereignty's practical and discursive dimensions in postcolonial states. A conclusion summarises the principal arguments of this chapter.

Comparing 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, soon brought the colonial administration in contact with its frontier zones on eastern and western flanks. It was not long before the theatre of European balance-of-power politics apparently shifted to the subcontinent. Whether this was inevitable or not, or whether the British colonial interests in India were genuinely threatened by French, Russian and Chinese presence are tricky questions which are still open to new conjectures. What is important to note is that the British Government in India found itself uncomfortable with vast tracts of forbidding frontiers that could be used by its imperial rivals to destabilise British India. This is clearly manifest in the case of the Durand Line where two wars and nearly a century of imperial diplomacy was invested in securing Afghanistan's boundaries. It is interesting that the Durand Line, which divided British India's possessions from those of Afghanistan's, was the last to be agreeably enforced upon the Afghan Amir. It perhaps testifies to the arguments forwarded by Great Game historians that securing Afghanistan's northern and western boundaries (the

possible routes for Russian invasion of British India) was relatively more important for the British Government in India than establishing its own boundary with Afghanistan. A roughly similar tale is obtained in the history of the McMahon Line. Warren Hastings sought trade route to China through Tibet. In the face of Tibetan reluctance to open itself to westerners, 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 19th century – when the Russian conquests of Central Asian khanates made decisive British interventions in Afghanistan and Tibet urgent – that we find the move towards securing boundaries of and with the two countries intensifying. That Afghanistan was paid more attention than Tibet is not so much of an anomaly. Historically, the former had been the route to invasion of India. That the British used the sea route to reach India had meant they were late, but not late enough, to realise the strategic importance of securing the north-western region. Once that realisation set in, the conquest of Sikh kingdom followed and soon British India's administrative frontier began breathing into Baloch and Pushtun territories. Just as the process of settling Afghan boundaries was drawing to its close, British attention began shifting towards Tibet. The Convention of 1890 and the Tibetan Trade Regulations of 1893 facilitated British entry into Tibet with a trade mart at Yatung. Curzon's immediate predecessor Elgin could, till 1898, offer trading profits as an explanation for non-intervention in Tibetan affairs. It was the imperial geopolitician in Curzon who grew suspicious of Russian interests in Tibet and prevailed upon London to permit Younghusband's armed expedition. The story from Lhasa Convention onwards is of a series of geopolitical maneuvres, some intended, some not that occasioned the Simla Conference. Simla, of course, produced the McMahon Line, albeit on paper.

On the surface, the link between the Durand and McMahon Lines and the Radcliffe Lines appear tenuous at best. The most obvious connection being that the latter, like the other two, resulted from colonial era machinations. But beyond this, connections seem non-existent or far-fetched. One plausible explanation for this could be the tremendous influence of Partition literature which, with its principle focus on nationalist and separatist elites' and the British Government in India's roles, subconsciously

relegates the territorial dimension of this politics. We could explore the territorial dimension of Partition narratives and gain a fair degree of explanatory purchase by examining the nature of Curzon's geopolitics. 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 – Bengal's Partition was one – left a powerful legacy. As we elaborate upon this connection later in the chapter, the argument would become clearer.

Since security of its Indian possession was the 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. Fear of territorial contact between British and Russian empires giving way to armed conflicts of any magnitude went a long way in ensuring this outcome for Afghanistan. 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 manipulative 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, recognised British interests in Afghanistan and divided Persia into three zones, with a neutral Persian buffer between the two empires. 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. (Lest the point be missed, similar sacrifices of sovereignty claims were extracted from Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim).

Colonial constructions as these have been, the three boundaries have arbitrariness hardwired into 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 population was separated by Radcliffe Lines in Bengal as well as in the Punjab. Perhaps the extreme example of arbitrariness was the Durand Line which cut the Pushtun speaking Pathans with shared adherence to Islam into two.

Each of the three boundaries inaugurated conflicts of varying degrees, the most prominent of them all being the Sino-Indian war. 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. A final aspect also needs to be examined. Even 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 modern state – must have had its roots in the way the colonisers thought about space. Liberalism provided that philosophical rationale for what came to be known as 'liberal imperialism'. Focusing upon the relationship between Liberalism and the British rule in India may offer some insights into understanding this process, especially since the politics of Partition appears so matted with liberal reforms.

The comparative outline above guides us to open the discussion to conceptual and theoretical insights into the nature of boundaries and their impact on territoriality. In particular, four distinct relationships present themselves for reexamination. These are 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 previous three, the contested nature of sovereignty in this part of the world as informed by territoriality. However, before we proceed to engage with these four relationships a review of existing scholarship on boundaries and territoriality is necessary.

Territory, Territoriality and Boundaries

Perhaps a good place to begin our enquiry is to ask a rather simple question: what is a territory? It 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 then, "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 organised with certain intent, becomes territory. How does territoriality accrue from territory? In answering this question some of the most important scholars and theorists of territoriality differ. However, we will attempt to sketch a representative picture. One of territoriality's foremost theorists, Robert Sack (1986) 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 (1-2).

As we move from this general understanding of territoriality to international relations we find an array of views. James Caporaso writes that territoriality is "a principle of political organization that delimits the spatial scope of public authority" (2000: 7). Whereas John Ruggie, in his seminal piece on territoriality, views it in terms of organisation of political space (1993: 148). Thus, territoriality is taken to be both political organisation of space as well as organisation of political space. (We could prefer the former as 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

organisation.) In the words of another scholar it is a "spatially defined political rule" (Kahler 2006: 3). John Agnew, the theorist of Critical Geopolitics, 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, regardless of the disagreements over the specific time of its emergence (though in a different context they are extremely important), is crucial to understanding the specificity of territoriality as a concept for research.

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, territoriality as a category diversifies to taxonomical reading. Forsberg (1996) classifies territoriality into six forms on the basis of human-environment relationships by surveying the literature on territoriality: our existence somewhere – ideally on a piece of earth – offers us Existential Territoriality; our attachment with a place, which sets conditions of and offers opportunities for human behaviour, activates Operational Territoriality; since we depend upon space for resources, our interaction produces Ecological Territoriality; the fundamentally territorial aspect of our animality can be termed Biological Territoriality; the cognitive and emotional links we establish with our environment generates Psychological Territoriality; and finally, as a means of organising power among humans this strategy produces Political Territoriality (359-362). Mathias Albert (2001) 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 *modernisation* and *rationalisation*. 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 (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 – commonly understood as zones of transition from one territorial polity to another – into boundaries, linear lines defining hard edges of modern states.[13] These distinctions are important; as are the technical differences between delineation and demarcation of boundaries (first articulated by Henry McMahon in 1897). But these need not detain us here. Our basic concern is to understand the inseparable link between territorial boundaries and territoriality. Any political organisation 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

[13] 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).

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 self-other binary and the most effective strategy of exclusion in the modern world. Boundaries enable territoriality to reify power, depersonalise 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).

We hope that the preceding discussion fairly represents the scholarship on territoriality and boundaries. Advantaged with the conceptual and theoretical understanding into our primary concern, we could proceed towards exploring, in some detail, the four relationships that our comparison of the histories of the Lines suggests. However, for the sake of convenience and clarity, it becomes imperative to mention some of the contributions made by John Agnew in recent years that are germane to understanding the politics of space in all the four relationships. This intervention may slightly, very slightly, appear as arresting the scheme of this chapter. But this brief diversion may help us avoid repetition in the following pages.

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' (1998: 11-31). This visualisation privileges the European (and later Euro-American) perspective of the world. Two characteristics of such visualisation 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" (11). As is evident, this standing out of the observer from the observed territorial space 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 visualisation produces binary geographies. The world seen as a structural whole is punctuated by boundaries of 'us' and 'them'. Now, boundaries are fundamental to nearly all societies. The novelty of this imagination lies, however, in visualising the world beyond the horizon – the world belonging to 'them' – as a source of chaos and danger (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*" (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. As we hope it will be clear a little later in the chapter, this single-perspectival strategy was instrumental in colonial history of the subcontinent, which, in turn, served as the justification for imperialism.

The second of Agnew's contributions relevant here is what he calls the strategy of translating 'Time into Space' (1998: 32-48; 2007: 140-141). The world, divided into blocks of space, is understood in terms of different time periods relative to the idealised historical experience of one of the blocks: the West. A product of 18th century European dynamics, this tendency characterises some places – usually the colonies – as "'following in the footsteps' of others as they recapitulate their previous history" (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" (1998: 33).

The third formulation offered by Agnew that is critical to our concern is what he calls 'The Territorial Trap' (1998: 51-59). 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" (51). Three assumptions underpin the territorial trap. One, 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 15th century Europe onwards when, in the course of four centuries, the location of sovereignty shifted from the monarch's person to territory. Two, 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 Hobbes' 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 reasons of state rule supreme outside. Thus, processes of economic and political competition get fixed at the level of system of states. Three, that state acts as the geographical container of modern society. Social and political identities get defined within the boundaries of states, thereby precluding the possibility to understanding them at different geographical scales. (Think of Punjabis or Tamils in South Asia.) The second and third assumptions, argues Agnew, date mainly from 20th century onwards.

These conceptual formulations help us understand the unique 'fonts of power' (to pluralise Agnew's term) that inform modern geopolitical imagination, and especially, the ones that were crucial in European (specifically British, for our concern) understanding of and action towards its colonial possessions. Let us now turn to the four relationships due for examination.

Liberalism Comes to Civilise

> A Country not only divided between Mohamedan and Hindu, but between tribe and tribe, between caste and caste; a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium, resulting from a general repulsion and a constitutional exclusiveness among all its members. Such a country and such a society, were they not the predestined prey of conquest? ... Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history (Marx 1978: 81).

Karl Marx, writing these words in 1853 on "The Future Results of the British Rule in India" denied the history of an India colonised rather simplistically. This was not, however, how the imperial strategy of denial worked in general. History was a tool to justify and perpetuate imperialism. Therefore, it needed to emerge from a tradition of European historiography with its attendant implications for the rest of the world. Liberalism, with John Locke having already offered its most comprehensive account, was the philosophical guidance of 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 Partition and independences a simultaneously-told story. Territorial consequences of Partition flow, mainly, from similar and same set of events and processes that occasioned independences in 1947. Liberal constitutionalism's facilitating role in independences has been commonly acknowledged in literature and so treated earlier. We could gain from, and contribute to, this understanding by searching for territorial implications of Liberalism's impact on colonial India. This may have been an arduous exercise had it not been for Uday Singh Mehta's immensely important *Liberalism and Empire* (1999). Mehta's study of British liberal thought in the late 18th and 19th centuries in the context of the British empire, especially imperial India, fills the gap in scholarship on empire to which British liberals – barring few exceptions – remained indifferent, perhaps consciously. 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. Drawing upon Mehta's scholarship, we first outline the trajectory of Liberalism's civilising mission and its

consequences. Secondly, we contextualise his treatment of Liberalism, empire and territory to search for its implications on subcontinental territoriality.

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 (and indeed should) be 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 upon 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-18th century European historiography had achieved firmly universal orientation, even if history was written from local stand points (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 (83-84). The elder Mill's multivolume *The History of British India* judged India as a backward civilisation, 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 civilisation which has reached a stage "when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion" (85). James Mill's *History* primarily aimed at ascertaining the civilisational stage to which India's extant conditions corresponded. Since he found that civilisation 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 civilised world, and perhaps prepare for a modicum of self governance (87-92). (Note the uncanny similarity between the geographical binaries Agnew discusses and the trend of European historiography. More pertinently, that between Mill's *History* and his 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 organising space are maps and censuses – together, embedding people within territory – and hence we could afford excluding museums.[14] 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: 224-254). 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 50 million Muslims in the subcontinent or one-fifth of the population. Forty percent of them lived in Bengal alone (Akbar 2002: 195). (Evidently, 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,

[14] See Gyan Prakash's *Another Reason* (1999) for a subaltern reading of museums and governmentality.

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, had manifested the marked shift in the nature of imperialism. When viceroys took over from governor generals, the hue of the London governments began to impact policies in British India. Else, how do we explain Ripon's haste in folding up the Second Anglo-Afghan War given the designs his Conservative predecessor had? Or the varying applications of Forward and Stationary frontier policies?

The argument here is that by the end of the 19th 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, building on Bernard Cohn and Anil Seal, argues that electoral democracy was closely related to ordering and systematising 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 recognised to constitutional reforms while offering it separate electorates. This perhaps offers a better reading of Curzon's salesmanship of Bengal's Partition to the Muslim crowd in Dacca in February 1904.

What we are trying to 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. Of course we are not discounting other impulses relevant to the story, but our privileging of Liberalism restricts our focus to just that. The turmoil of politics was woven around what the colonial government was willing to offer, how the Congress 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 failed to impress local elites, the logic of separate electorates was stretched by Jinnah with able, if unintended, assistance from the Congress, 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. But more 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. 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 the 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. This is the second important point we acknowledge from Mehta's scholarship, and use it for our second objective of exploring the implications of liberal imperialism on South Asian territoriality. In a complex set of arguments 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 (123-125). Thus, the earth becomes worthless in its materiality and inert in its sentimental force (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" (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 (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 (128). Finally, specifically flowing from previous implication is that Locke's account cannot lend significance to nor account for the fact that political societies have territorial boundaries (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. Building on this argument would help us grasp the outcomes of local reciprocation to liberal imperialism and also the implications of liberal imperialism for South Asian territoriality.

The only thinker to have realised 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 his 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 (for a brief account of the trials, see Ahmed 2002). 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 (133-135). 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 (which they did not, though his influence on Company's subsequent dealings on the subcontinent was tremendous) the trajectory of colonial state, especially after mid-19th century, would perhaps have altered. Philosophically, this is the moment when Lockean Liberalism's concrete effects on colonialism are diagnosed, analysed 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, 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 colonised began to write back. Recent research (Goswami 2004) has argued that nationalist re-imagination of India as a geo-historical entity began in the 1860s (see esp.

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 homemade goods – comes from *swadesh*, meaning national territory. To extend Goswami's argument about nationalist re-imagination of India (2004: 242-243), this was the territorial reference which partly drove the agitations 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. It is here argued that 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 conceptualisation 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 (to take liberty with David Ludden's coinage) why would the Muslims want to live in it? Doubts gradually gave way to territorial suggestions like the one offered by Iqbal. And schemes as Rehmat Ali would have it. But it was Jinnah who provided political capital to doubts and capitalised upon them. Seen in perspective, the territorial ambiguity of 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. Sure enough there were contestations. But, they respected the outcome by and large. For a decolonisation 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. Nehru had no hesitations in withdrawing extra-territorial claims secured by the British in Tibet as it surely was an imperialist violation. 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 throughout the 60 years of it existence.

The preceding discussion, having explored the impact of Liberalism and territorial politics, sheds some light on territoriality in the subcontinent. Philosophical and ideational underpinnings of imperialism, however, need to be studied along with that distinct practice germane to imperial territorial machinations: geopolitics. The following discussion takes up this task.

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 19th century. Modern geopolitics must be studied along with modern geopolitical imagination – "the predominant manner in which global politics has been represented, and acted on geographically, both by major personalities and intellectuals/institutions of statecraft over the past two centuries" (Chaturvedi 2002: 2). Territorial aggrandisement was central to European imperialism of late 19th 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).

Benefiting from this historicised definition of geopolitics we aim at examining the impact of imperial geopolitics on the territoriality of the subcontinent. We do so in two parts. In the first, we highlight the consequences of Anglo-Russian imperial rivalry on the process of state-formation in the region. In the second, we draw upon Critical Geopolitics to examine 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. Conflicts still arose, and when any two imperial entities found themselves breathing down the other's neck, 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 (1986) 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 (36). We find the manipulation of the location of boundaries clearly obtaining 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. When, at last Panjdeh happened in 1885, the best possible frontier (from the perspective of imperial powers) was agreed upon without taking Afghanistan's ruler into confidence or consultation. The settling of its northern frontier, in turn, facilitated the British to impose the Durand Line on Afghanistan. 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 the Lonchen rather than arrived through discussion.

This fixing and imposition of irrational boundaries on weaker states to avoid imperialist confrontation also reveals other processes simultaneously at work. 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 there is a larger argument to be made here with regards to 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 recognised British interests' (Afghanistan). Indeed, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 officially endorsed such statuses for these weaker territorial entities. To extend the argument, it is here suggested that 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. Though our case-study is limited to these two in particular, a larger trend is clearly obtained in the region when we study British extraction of similar arrangements with Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. The theoretical implications of this arrangement will be elaborated later in the chapter. For the moment, suffice it to argue that it poses critical questions to our understanding of the emergence of competitive state-system in the region.

Read critically, geopolitics can be conceptualised 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 us understand Curzon's territorial division of Bengal as a continuation of his larger geopolitics in British India's frontier affairs. Moreover, it also helps us view more clearly the spatial aspects of the subcontinent's politics in the run up to 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: 125-160).

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. This is where Partha Chatterjee's remark becomes important. 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 (2005b: 128-146). We could add to this list the United Bengal scheme of H.S. Suhrawardy and his comrades. Thus, the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947 was an exercise in reductionist geopolitics in so far as it privileged one outcome over others. In doing so, the Radcliffe Lines that testified to and fixed this outcome, imposed a culture of anxiety on 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, though, as we have seen, territoriality is much more that mere state obsession with territory.

Imperial geopolitics (both practical and discursive) also affected demographic continuities and social groups which were interrupted and divided by the constructed boundaries. We outline some aspects of these processes in the following part.

Contradictions of Territoriality

Territorial boundaries are disruptive agents in concrete and discursive senses. Concretely, they arrest 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 organising principle of social and political life lends, ultimately, this significance to boundaries. As Passi (1999) notes, the changing meanings of boundaries in the construction, organisation and reproduction of social life also affects the way we understand territoriality. The three boundaries we are concerned with have also displayed similar characteristics. Their linearity has produced sharp edges which have simultaneously included and excluded clusters of demographic continuities in the subcontinent. Moreover, we will argue, that the prelude to Partition of 1947 made it imperative for some demographic groups – the Hindu and Muslim communities specifically – to declare their territorial attachments and detachments. Since this process was not neat, as it was hoped, loyalty of those Muslims who professed attachment to India and decided to stay has continued to be questioned.

The essential contradiction between boundaries and people is best exposed by demographic mobility. South Asia has been a region characterised 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 (1997) 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 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. These *Namal* labourers were similar to *Powinda* merchants and petty usurers of southern Afghanistan who would annually cross the Bolan, Sibi and Gomal passes into Balochistan and spread to most of the subcontinent (18-27). The Rohilla fighters (originally from Ruh in 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 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. *Kabuliwallahs* have become fables. Along with this actively mobile lot, the three 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. We need not stretch the narration with more examples, our basic point is that these territorial boundaries – international in their legal status – have not only attempted to seal historic patterns of movements, but also divided nationalities.

The rationalisation 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 every single 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. There was, so to speak, a Badruddin Tayyabji for every Sayyed Ahmed Khan; or Abul Kalam Azad for every Jinnah. When the British devised policies for the Muslims, they had their own rationalised and objectified Muslim community in mind whose self-serving elite was quick to kowtow to its colonial masters. The very first constitutional reforms recognised 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, rationalised Muslim community the British recognised. This trap of Partition came to the fore during the Simla Conference where the Congress refused to be recognised 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 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 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 (1999), 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" (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 basic question the majority had in mind was: what constituted as an adequate proof of the Muslims' loyalty to India? Among many, the defence of the country was considered pivotal. An education minister in the Congress government in UP expressed fear that the natural frontier of India (the Khyber) having gone to Pakistan, Indian Muslims' loyalty in defending the new boundaries may be suspect (616). A fear of war with Pakistan was also present. For the deputy chief of Indian Army Staff, Major General K.M. Kariappa, "Non-violence (is) of no use under the present circumstances in India" (616). In October 1947, the socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia asked Indian Muslims to "surrender arms and . . . be loyal citizens of India, ready to fight, if need be, against Pakistan or any other country" (617). And so on it went, as it has continued to today. 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, her loyalty constantly under scrutiny. Elsewhere, as the Pushtun nationalism exemplifies, state-accorded citizenship holds no meaning. These are contradictions of territoriality which, we can argue, cannot be satisfactorily explained by restricting our focus to mere physical-legal status of boundaries.

We have explored, to this point, the philosophical substratum of the British rule in the subcontinent and its implications on territoriality; the consequences of imperial geopolitics on the nature of state-formation and the discursive impact of its 'excess'; and the contradictions in territoriality that ruptures produced by boundaries exhibit. It is

fitting that we conclude by flagging some of the issues involved in understanding sovereignty as it obtains from the histories we have discussed.

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 does not ever translate to exchanges between its couriers. Indeed, it may be the most-breached principle of international politics so diligently upheld by 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. The term 'colonial sovereignty' is a fair example of this contradiction. On further exploring, other issues arise. For example, if sovereignty is imposed by the colonisers, 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? These are, no doubt, questions that merit separate attention by themselves. Our mandate does not permit full elaboration. However, it may still be possible to indicate the leads on some of these questions with the help of the boundaries we have historicised.

Sovereignty has generated much debate in international relations scholarship. Contestations abound over its origins, nature, location and future (see, Osiander 2001; Teschke 1998; de Mesquita 2000; Ruggie 1993; Burch 2000; Walker and Mendlovitz 1990; Krasner 1995/96 and 1999, for a representative account). We are, however, concerned with sovereignty as it obtains in postcolonial South Asia and the role of colonial boundaries in its construction. Towards this end, we borrow a definition of sovereignty that, arguably, appears agreeable. 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, the sovereign is one who has authority. Two, the 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 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 (17). The centrality of territoriality to theory and practice of sovereignty directs us towards an interesting claim put forward by few scholars on the internationalisation (if it can be so called) of sovereignty. Philpott in *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, Hendryk Spruyt (2000; 2005), David Strang (1992) have argued, from varying perspectives, that the process of decolonisation represents an extension and expansion of Westphalian system of sovereignty whereby the decolonised states got appropriated into the logic of Westphalia. Ewan Anderson has summarised 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 – and we argue that it is – then the histories of boundaries being studied here and the impact they have had on postcolonial sovereignty exhibit tendencies that do not fit the claims made above. Let us examine some of them.

The relationship between sovereignty and territory in precolonial subcontinent and the British imposition of alien institutions to reconfigure this relationship is the first avenue we explore. In their discussion on what they call the 'Problem of Difference' in international relations, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney (2004), 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" (22). This 'Westphalian Deferral' (21-45), poses difficulties in appreciating the multiple and overlapping nature of sovereignty that existed in precolonial spaces. They explain this with the example of the Mughal rule

in India which was primarily concerned with the flow of revenues from working of the land. As long as the revenues kept flowing in, the Mughal administration left the claim of local cultivators over territory intact. This suggested that overlapping claims to a piece of territory existed in precolonial India (191-197). The British rule, with its insistence on rationalising space, eclipsed this flexibility with institutions like the Permanent Settlement system introduced by Charles Cornwallis, the governor general. 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 pre-modern 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 British constructed and a part of which is a Pakistan province). Recall that even at the height of their administrative efficiency, effective British's 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" (69). Pakistan, realised 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 improved 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.

To carry forward the issue of multiple and overlapping sovereignty, the relation of people with land is crucial to understanding symbolic import of 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 realisation remains open to explanations. In attempting to explain this, Gilmartin (1998) notes that for the Muslim community in general (which included the British recognised Muslim community) attachment to particular territory was essential to its moral sovereignty (1081-1089). 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. This the scholarship proposing decolonisation as extension of Westphalian sovereignty does not acknowledge.

We have earlier indicated towards the puzzle, in a different context, 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 colonised. We have also pointed out that the construction of colonial sovereignty in India was achieved by denying sovereignty claims of Afghanistan and, indirectly, Tibet. The Treaty of Gandamak and the Lhasa Convention institutionalised this arrangement. Afghanistan remained bounded by the terms of Gandamak when the Durand agreement was signed. Lhasa Convention remained in force when McMahon pulled off his trick. Thus, the two issues – denial of sovereignty and the contested nature of the boundaries – are fundamentally linked. Moreover, they indicate towards 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 polarising 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 recognise India's assertive claims of sovereignty on territory south of the McMahon Line. We make this distinction to highlight that arguments about extension of Westphalian sovereignty do not appear to hold. Sovereignty, seen from the perspective of colonial boundaries, emerges as a contested concept and practiced in variety of complex ways. Generalisations, based on formal notions, do not adequately capture its diverse manifestations.

A final point, not entirely related to the arguments of preceding paragraphs of this part but connected nonetheless, needs to be mentioned. Sovereign territorial states are assumed to be 'containers' (or 'power containers') representing an ideal coincidence of social, political and economic factors within a territory (Taylor 2003: 101-113). That such an ideal container cannot be found in South Asia (or perhaps anywhere in the world anymore) is evident from our discussion till now. We can only point out two curiosities – one geographical, another cultural – that have survived as unintended consequences of the Partition and the state-system that emerged in the region. The geographical curiosities, 197 in all, are the enclaves strewn along the northern border of Bangladesh (an enclave is a portion of one state completely surrounded by the territory of another state). A product of 1947, 123 of these are Indian while 74 belong to Bangladesh. Willem van Schendel, a chronicler of these 'enclave people', remarks: "In their complexity, number, political significance, and social eccentricity, they have no parallel in the world" (2002: 117). The proxy citizens of these enclaves represent a transterritorial dimension of nationalism that emerged in the aftermath of August 1947. The cultural curiosities, on the

other hand, are the Kachin people, whose territorial domains were cut in four in 1947-49 by international boundaries. Today they find themselves as 'unaccounted territorialities' in China, Burma, Thailand and India (Dean 2005: 50-54). These are few reminders from the periphery that rational containers do leak.

Sovereignty, this part has argued, is not an absolute concept. Imposition of institutions and strategies that construct and sustain sovereignty does not return neat results. Precolonial tendencies, we have tried to argue, 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 characteristic that question the supremacy of authority over a territory. Postcolonial territorialities, therefore, do not agree with claims or logics of their Westphalian cousin. In doing so, they invite the need to pay attention to specificities of each colonial experience of constructing sovereignty.

A Conclusion

David Harvey's reminder is instructive. Space and Time, moulded in this chapter to compare territorial histories, reveal tendencies that cannot simply be wished away by taking them for granted or assigning them to common sense attributes. For example, territoriality often passes for some axiomatic condition of statehood which holds true for all modern states across the globe. At a simplistic level, it is true. But its trueness as well as its potential to be generalised end right there. As we have argued through our comparison and showed through our discussion of scholarship on territoriality, the concept is much more complex and diverse in its meanings. The comparison here aimed at establishing processes and outcomes. We argued that four relationships obtain which need to be studied. Liberalism, so central to the British empire, was intolerant and contradictory in its application in the subcontinent. By denying individual and collective political identities, which were linked territorially, to the natives, liberal imperialism assumed for itself the role of rationalising the space and civilising its people. Institutions were introduced to achieve this task, and strategies like mapping the space and fixing categories of people within it were also adopted. Contradictions began to surface once the

natives realised the denial of their territorial vision and got the space to write back and engage the empire. Some, like the Congress elites, professed inclusive conceptions of territorial unity; others, like the Hindu right-wing approximated similar territorial vision but insisted on Muslim exclusion; while still others, like elites of British recognised Muslim community, harped on a separate territorial entity. After Bengal's Partition these processes fuelled into the contradictions of liberal imperialism to produce the second Partition of 1947. We have also argued that Liberalism's denial of native political communities' territorial boundaries may explain why Radcliffe boundaries were insisted upon and have been upheld by postcolonial India, Pakistan, and later Bangladesh. This chapter then offered a critical reading of modern imperial geopolitics. Two arguments were suggested. One, state-formation in the subcontinent has been an uneven process which is shown clearly by the fact that colonial sovereignty of British India was achieved by denial of sovereignty claims of Afghanistan, and indirectly, Tibet. Two, if we demolish the domestic-international binary of international relations and see domestic aspects of spatial politics activated by the British, we find a continuity between its frontier and provincial geopolitics. Here, we argued, geopolitics appears as an exercise in reductionist reasoning whose 'excess' privileged Partition of British India. This was construed, therefore, as a zero-sum process which has historically marked India-Pakistan relations. In the third part of our discussion, we highlighted the practical and discursive contradictions that boundaries propel in territoriality by acting as its disruptive agents. At practical level, the colonial boundaries disrupted historically continuous mobility and more stable demographic continuities. At the discursive level, these boundaries disrupted the attachments of communities over territory. We substantiated this argument by citing the example of those Muslims who chose to stay in India and whose loyalty as citizens continues to be questioned. The final part did no more than outline some interesting issues on sovereignty (defined by these boundaries) the comparison and previous three discussions suggest. We examined the claim that decolonisation was an extension and expansion of Westphalian sovereignty. We found that such absolute assertions, though they appear true at one broad level, do not correspond to specific complexities involved in construction of sovereignty. We suggested that sovereignty has assertion and recognition as its twin dimensions. Sovereignty based on assertion alone is exhibited in

the upholding of the legitimacy of colonial boundaries, but those states whose sovereignty was denied by these boundaries have refused to reciprocate recognition. Also, precolonial territorial tendencies persisted through the colonial period to impact postcolonial territorial states. The most unstable instance of this, we argued, is Pakistan. We also outlined the discursive impacts of producing sovereign entities, which rather formal claims of Westphalia's adherents have not addressed. We take a more comprehensive stock of the territorial histories discussed in the preceding pages, and contextualise the arguments suggested in this chapter, in a brief concluding chapter to which we now turn.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

That we exist in space and time is not contentious. Not all of us, however, exist in the same political space and time. The difference between the two statements is the problem of difference. Understanding this problem may be a good place to start few conclusions. The American political scientist John Herz (who offered the finest possible exposition of 'security dilemma' after the venerable Sir Ralph Norman Angell did so in an instructive compendium on preventing war meant for intelligent men) came to an important conclusion in 1957. Territorial states, he claimed, were headed towards demise because territoriality, which he likened with the impermeability of states, and which he argued was the basis on which stability of territorial states hinged, was weakened by advancement of immensely destructive means of warfare, particularly atomic weapons (Herz 1957). Eleven years later, Herz re-visited his conclusion and expressed doubts over his previous thesis (Herz 1968). He now argued that a 'new territoriality' of sorts was visible on the horizon which can survive the era of atomic weapons and, in fact, enable territorial states a new measure of self-sufficiency. Herz revised his conclusions in the face of events in West Asia and Vietnam. Even if we set aside the remarkable resurgence of the concept of territoriality in Herz's scholarship, there is an important point to be made. His original thesis predicting the passing away of territorial states came three years before the landmark UN resolution on decolonisation – the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Two years before this article was published, British and French flags together flew virtually across the globe. Within a decade since its publication, only the Ascension Islands and few other outposts remained within the ambit of the two empires.

One hopes the problem of difference is conveyed here. Simply put, whether Herz's thesis on the future of territorial states was accurate or not was not as important as the assertion that what may have been true for a handful of states applied universally for all states, across time and space. This was arguably a harsh judgement to pass when most social collectives across the world were still awaiting the arrival of territorial states. One suspects similar acts of overlooking or denying the existence of the problem of difference

inform the burgeoning literature which detects in the spread of globalisation the recession of territoriality, understood and associated with territorial states. Our first conclusion, which must also be seen as a rationale for studies of territoriality in many regions of the world, is that it is important to identify, and critically engage with particular claims passed on as being of universal applicability. Therefore, just as territoriality is not an ahistorical concept whose mere cognisance is sufficient for international relations scholarship, it is also not a concept that can be associated with a particular historical continuity alone. Territoriality obtains in specific historical circumstances, and we have tried to argue that acknowledging such complex histories helps us understand it better. Moreover, as the comparison of the histories of the three boundaries suggests, territoriality cannot be reduced to or equated with states alone. True, states are important agents of territoriality, but they are not the only ones. Treating territoriality as such limits our understanding of its diversity.

This research has primarily been about trying to better understand territoriality both as a concept and as an organising principle in a particular region. We chose South Asia as that region and we selected three of its most contentious boundaries as case-studies towards this end. Using scholarship associated with Constructivism and Critical Geopolitics, we attempted to view boundaries and territoriality not only in their conventional meanings (where territoriality is equated with states' absolute control over their territory and boundaries are understood by their physical presence and legal status) but also in their discursive roles and impacts. A key to this more comprehensive understanding lies in critical engagement with underlying assumptions of modern geopolitical imagination. We relied primarily upon Agnew's contributions for this purpose. Understanding the politics of visualising global space from single (European) perspective helps understand the spatial aspects of imperialism's civilising mission. With this in background we benefited from Mehta's interpretations of liberal historiography and the relationship between liberalism and imperial territoriality. One's interest in liberal imperialism's role in the Partition initially grew out of engagement with paradoxes produced by constitutional reforms the British introduced. Curiosity gave way to more sustained engagement after reading Robb's *Liberalism, Modernity and the Nation* where

he makes a case for a more sympathetic consideration of liberal imperialism (2007). Of particular interest was the chapter on "Borders and Allegiances" where he argues that pre-existing spatial tendencies were incorporated by liberal imperialism to construct the nation and its territorial identity (58-89). Something in Robb's explanation was still missing, or at any rate, perhaps out of the mandate of his work. This was the foundational moment and philosophy underlying liberal imperialism's space organising strategy in the subcontinent. Mehta's interpretation appeared to hold in the light of Critical Geopolitics. We built upon these insights to suggest that territoriality in the subcontinent cannot be understood without giving due attention to liberal imperialism. This is important not only because the strategies of configuring space that liberal imperialism adopted were later utilised by local elites to reclaim their territorial space, but also because it helps shed more light in understanding the importance of territorial boundaries that separated India and Pakistan. More specifically, the study suggests that a clue to why India and Pakistan have upheld their colonial boundaries may lie in liberal imperialism's denial of territory-based individual and collective identities of locals and its inability to acknowledge that political communities have territorial boundaries.

When put in this perspective, constant references to territory by leaders of the subcontinent in the final years of colonial rule begin to make more sense. For example, Indian nationalists with inclusive vision like Nehru felt the need to discover India and attribute its unity to its supposedly unique geography. When Pakistan became a reality, he mourned the loss of a national geography. On July 14, 1947, when the AICC met to ratify the June 3 Plan, following words were inserted in the resolution on Nehru's insistence: "Geography and the mountains and the seas fashioned India as she is, and *no human agency can change that shape* or come in the way of her *final destiny* (quoted in Akbar 1988: 414) (emphasis added). Liberal imperialism did much to alter the subcontinent's territoriality. The space it politically organised produced reciprocal, even retaliatory responses from the natives. The consequence was to no one's satisfaction. The territory promised to Jinnah was eaten by the political moth of counter claims. Nehru's geographical determinism, the 'final destiny', did not come true either. Teleology being a hard temptation to resist, he inaugurated independent India consoling his countrypeople

and himself with a certain tryst they had with destiny, long time ago. We have also suggested that because Partition became possible on the logic of territorial loss (for India) and gain (for Pakistan), a zero-sum approach has informed their mutual interactions. In common usage, such behaviour is equated with territoriality. But we have argued that territoriality is more complex an arrangement than mere state-obsession with territory.

Another issue this study pursued was the trajectory of state-formation in the region. Imperial geopolitics was instrumental in constructing modern territorial states in the region. It was beyond the scope of the study to follow the issue comprehensively. Hence, only a few tentative suggestions can be offered. We suggested that imperial rivalries coupled with the mandate of converting frontiers into boundaries to produce modern states created an uneven trajectory of state-formation in the region. Sovereignty of British India was achieved by denial of sovereignties of Afghanistan, and indirectly, Tibet. In doing so, legitimacy of postcolonial boundaries became contested. Assertion of territorial sovereignty by India and Pakistan (by upholding the Durand and McMahon boundaries) has not been reciprocated by its recognition by neighbours who share these boundaries. An implication of this has been that sovereignty itself has become a coveted price for states in the region. We do not argue that states in general are casual about sovereignty. What we suggest, however, is that colonial boundaries may hold an important explanation to such obsession with territorial sovereignty. It is interesting that the most recent crisis the Pakistan state witnessed – when in early November 2007 a state of emergency was declared – was articulated by its president in terms of a threat to its territorial sovereignty. Such anxieties have been very common to postcolonial states in South Asia. Sankaran Krishna (1994) argues that the social and political production of nationality in India is intimately linked with the "contested and tortured production of (its) sovereign identity" (508). This leads to what he calls 'cartographic anxiety'. We suggest that similar 'cartographic anxieties' are exhibited by Pakistan as well, contested and tortured as the production (and sustenance) of its sovereignty have been.

We earlier argued that discursive aspects of boundaries and territoriality are just as important as the more evident practical dimensions. Critical Geopolitics enables us to

foreground these symbolic impacts that boundaries and territoriality produce on people and processes. We made, therefore, a case for viewing the Partition of Bengal by Curzon as an aspect of imperial geopolitics. This could only be done by demolishing the domestic-international binary traditional geopolitics is associated with. Seen in the new light, geopolitical processes unleashed by the Partition of Bengal lead to its 'excess', as Chaturvedi suggests, which was an exercise in reductionism. Its fallout was the privileging of one form of territorial reasoning – the Partition of British India which was in the ultimate favour of the Muslim League – relegating all other forms of territorial claims, including those that were against Partition. Needless to add that this privileging lead to the Radcliffe boundaries and its consequences. A second suggestion this study has forwarded pertains to the impact that the exigencies of the Partition had on demographic continuities. We highlighted the dilemmas of those Muslims who chose to remain in independent India and not cross the new territorial boundaries. We argued that the need to declare attachment or detachment to territories on either side of the new boundaries left this Muslim community in an unwanted trap. Since territorial Partition was not a neat process, Muslims in India remained on the margins on the new state's organising strategies; their citizenship granted, but their loyalty suspected. This process, we suggested, can be also be understood by examining the symbolic impact of contending strategies of organising territorial space.

Revisiting territoriality by comparing the histories of the Durand, McMahon and Radcliffe Lines has offered tentative leads into understanding its evident, practical as well as its latent, discursive dimensions. We stress on the word tentative because these are merely suggestions. The four relationships we discussed in the previous chapter and clubbed together in preceding paragraphs have potential to be engaged further, each of them separately. In particular, the impact of liberalism on territoriality and its consequences on the nature of sovereignty obtained in this part of the world have much to be researched about. They can be effectively used to contest the claim that decolonisation represents an extension of Westphalian system of sovereignty. Further, this study was about strategies of organising space and some of its outcomes. Imperialism played a dominant role, but later contending strategies emerged. We have tried to highlight the

processes of these strategies and some of its more important outcomes. Therefore, we do not make tall claims about the evolving nature of postcolonial territoriality in the region. We also suggested that a better understanding of boundaries can only be obtained by engaging with them in the thick of their histories. The comparison presented here is one useful way to proceed. After all, social-political enclosures have their own peculiarities which cannot be understood outside the context of their origins.

Appendix 1: A Selected Calendar

1600: The East India Company is established by a royal charter in December.

1608: The first ship of the Company docks in India.

1617: The Mughal emperor Jahangir grants trading rights to the Company.

1623: Fighting ensues between the Dutch and the British East India Company over the latter's warehouse on Amboyna, a small island in Southeast Asia. All Englishmen massacred. The Company merchants see it fit to pursue trade elsewhere, in a safer place. They focus more on India.

1640: The Company acquired Madras and builds Fort St. George.

1716: Emperor Farrukhsiyar signs a *firman* (official order) which the British describe as their Magna Carta in India. The Company is allowed to trade, acquire land and settle where it wants to in Bengal, all for an annual payment of Rs 3000.

1739: The Persian Nadir Shah sacks Delhi. It indirectly works to the British's advantage.

1747: Ahmed Shah Abdali is chosen the Shah of Afghans in October. Beginning of modern Afghanistan.

1757: On June 23, Robert Clive, aided by Mir Jafar, wins the battle at Plassey.

1773: Ahmed Shah Abdali dies; disintegration of the Afghanistan he consolidated begins.

1774: First British mission under Bogle enters Tibet.

1782: Second British mission to Tibet under Turner. James Rennell, the surveyor general of Bengal, begins mapping the subcontinent. Concludes by 1788. Future cartographic ventures of the British follow his lead.

1792: Tipoo Sultan of Mysore is defeated and killed by the British.

1793: The Permanent Settlement of Bengal concluded by Charles Cornwallis.

1801: Tsar Paul I's forces, the Don Cossacks, march towards India. They turn back on hearing the news of his assassination.

1807: Treaty of Tilsit signed between France and Russia.

1809: Treaty of Friendship between the British Government and the King of Kabul.

1826: The British become suzerain of Assam following the Treaty of Yandaboo.

1839: The First Anglo-Afghan War begins. Ends in 1842. Britain occupies Aden which later became governed from imperial capital in Calcutta.

1842: British administration in Assam established.

1849: British forces win the battle of Gujarat against the Sikh army, the Khalsa kingdom folds up.

1857: The Revolt takes the subcontinent by storm, the British empire trembles. Far-reaching changes in strategies of rule introduced in its aftermath.

1858: The Queen's Proclamation.

1861: British sign a treaty with Sikkim which effectively denied sovereignty claims of the latter.

1863: Prince Gorchakov appointed imperial chancellor of Russia. His frontier diplomacy became one of the highlights of the Great Game.

1871: This and the subsequent year saw the first census of British India. Helps the British understand demographic composition of 'communities'. Four such communities identified: Aryans (Brahmins and Rajputs), Mixed, Aborigines and Muslims.

1873: Russia declares Afghanistan beyond its sphere of influence vide the Granville-Gorchakov agreement. Renewed British efforts to open Tibet for regulated trade. The Outer and Inner Lines of administration are drawn by the British on the northeast frontier.

1878: The British Government in India declares war against Afghanistan. Subsequently called the Second Anglo-Afghan War.

1879: Treaty of Gandamak imposed upon Afghanistan, signed on 26 May 1879.

1880: Abdur Rehman Khan becomes the Amir of Afghanistan. His reign lasting 21 years saw the territorial consolidation of Afghanistan as it obtains today.

1884: Russia announces the annexation of Merv; the British suffer from 'mervousness'.

1885: Panjdeh incident in March. Boundary diplomacy ensues, securing Afghanistan's northern boundaries by 1887. Founding of the Indian National Congress.

1888: Sayyed Ahmed Khan claims the Congress has been created by Hindus to subjugate Muslims under their rule, in April.

1890: The Anglo-Chinese Convention recognises Sikkim as a British protectorate.

1893: Mortimer Durand fixes the Indo-Afghan boundary with Abdur Rehman; the agreement signed on 12 November 1893. A set of Tibetan Trade Regulations attached to the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890.

1903: Curzon proposes an armed expedition to Lhasa to intimidate the Tibetans and open British-Tibetan trade. The Younghusband mission takes off.

1904: The Lhasa Convention between British India and Tibet. Tibet could not deal with any foreign power without British consent henceforth.

1905: Curzon partitions Bengal citing administrative inconveniences. The consequences are too many and too important.

1906: The All India Muslim League founded in Dhaka.

1907: The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 divides Persia into three zones, recognises Tibet as a neutral buffer and Afghanistan as a buffer with special British interests. Arguably, the final stroke of the Great Game.

1909: Morley-Minto Reforms recognising separate Muslim electorates introduced. The Punjab Hindu Sabha (later Hindu Mahasabha) founded.

1910: Chao Erh-feng marches to Lhasa. His activities on the frontier alarm the British.

1911: Bengal's Partition revoked at the Delhi Durbar in December.

1913: The Simla conference begins. McMahon's manipulative diplomacy ensures the boundary with Tibet.

1916: Congress and the Muslim League sign the Lucknow Pact, for joint action on constitutional reforms.

1919: The Third Anglo-Afghan War. Peace called with the Treaty of Rawalpindi which recognised effective Afghan sovereignty and freed it from the clutches of Gandamak.

1923: V.D. Savarkar's *Hindutva* published.

1924: Lala Lajpat Rai offers a territorial scheme for Muslims suggesting four states implying a partition of the subcontinent into a 'Muslim India' and a 'non-Muslim India'.

1925: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh founded in Nagpur.

1927: A section of Muslim elites under Jinnah's leadership forwards the 'Delhi Proposals'.

1930: The poet Iqbal suggests amalgamation of four Muslim majority provinces on the northwest into a single state, within or without the British empire.

1933: Rehmat Ali coins the term 'Pakistan', demands it too. Dubbed by many a "students' scheme".

1935: Olaf Caroe discovers the neglected McMahon boundary and contrives successfully their publication in an early-date volume of the Aitchison's *Treaties*. The Government of India Act introduced.

1937: Congress sweeps first elections under the new constitution. Muslim League decimated. Having returned from England Jinnah takes charge of the Muslim League.

1940: In March the Muslim League demands a separate state through the Lahore Resolution.

1942: The Cripps Mission arrives. Gandhi asks the British to 'Quit India' and leave the country to God or anarchy.

1945: The Simla Conference too breaks down.

1946: The three-member Cabinet Mission arrives. Complex negotiations between the Mission, the Congress and Jinnah. Both Jinnah and the Congress accept the Mission's proposals. Later they falter.

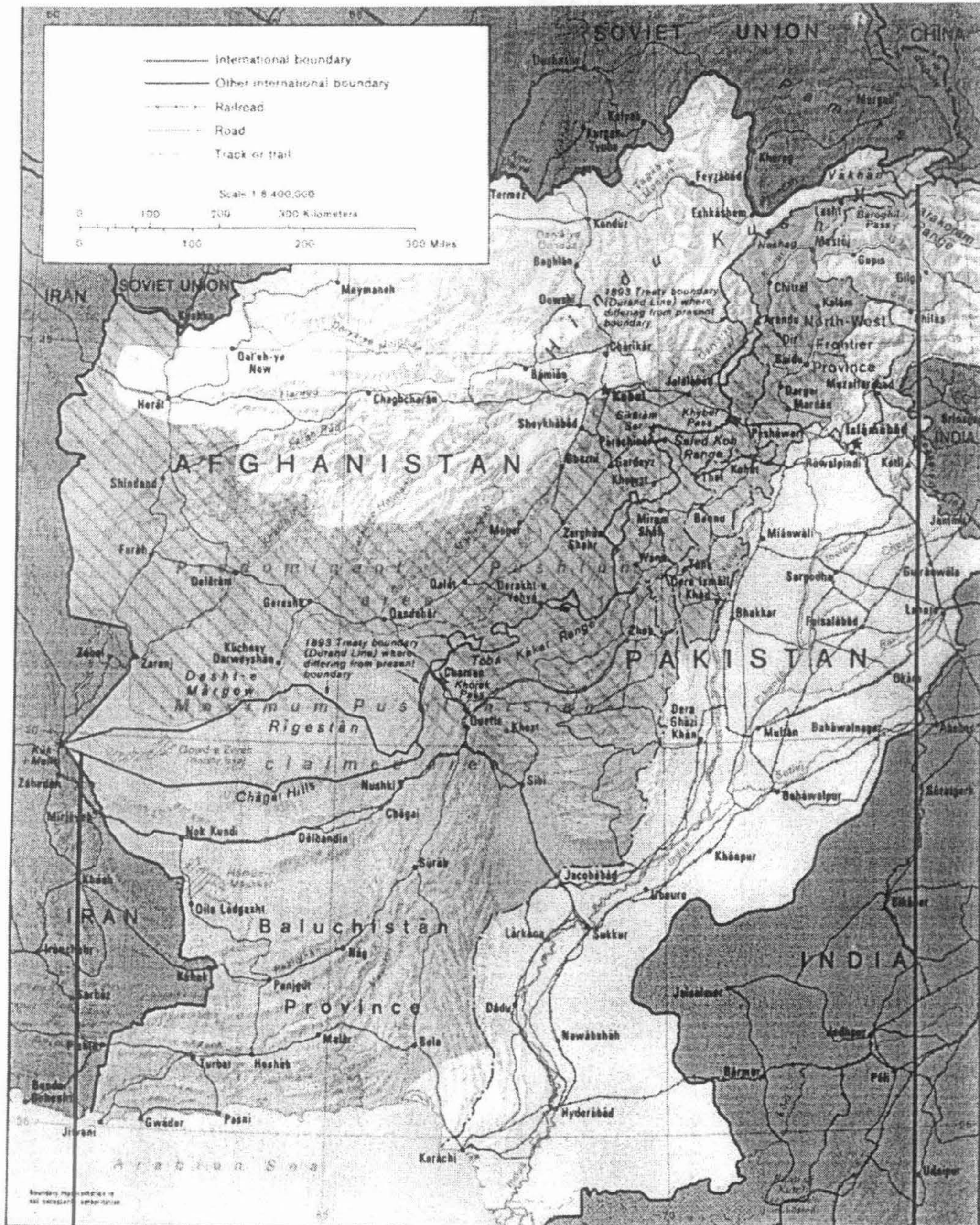
1947: Partition agreed upon through the Plan Balkan. Transfer of Power ends the British empire in the subcontinent. Two new territorial states – Pakistan and India – come into being with the Radcliffe Lines as their boundaries. The question of owning the territorial obligations of colonial government arises. Both India and Pakistan accept. Tibet sends a list of territorial claims to the Government of India. Afghanistan refuses to acknowledge Pakistan as the rightful heir to colonial territorial obligations and hence unilaterally discards all agreements and treaties signed with the British.

1954: The Sino-Indian Treaty of friendship signed. India renounces all extra-territorial rights in Tibet acquired by the colonial government.

1962: War between China and India.

1971: Pakistan is partitioned; birth of Bangladesh.

Appendix 2.1: Map depicting the Durand Line

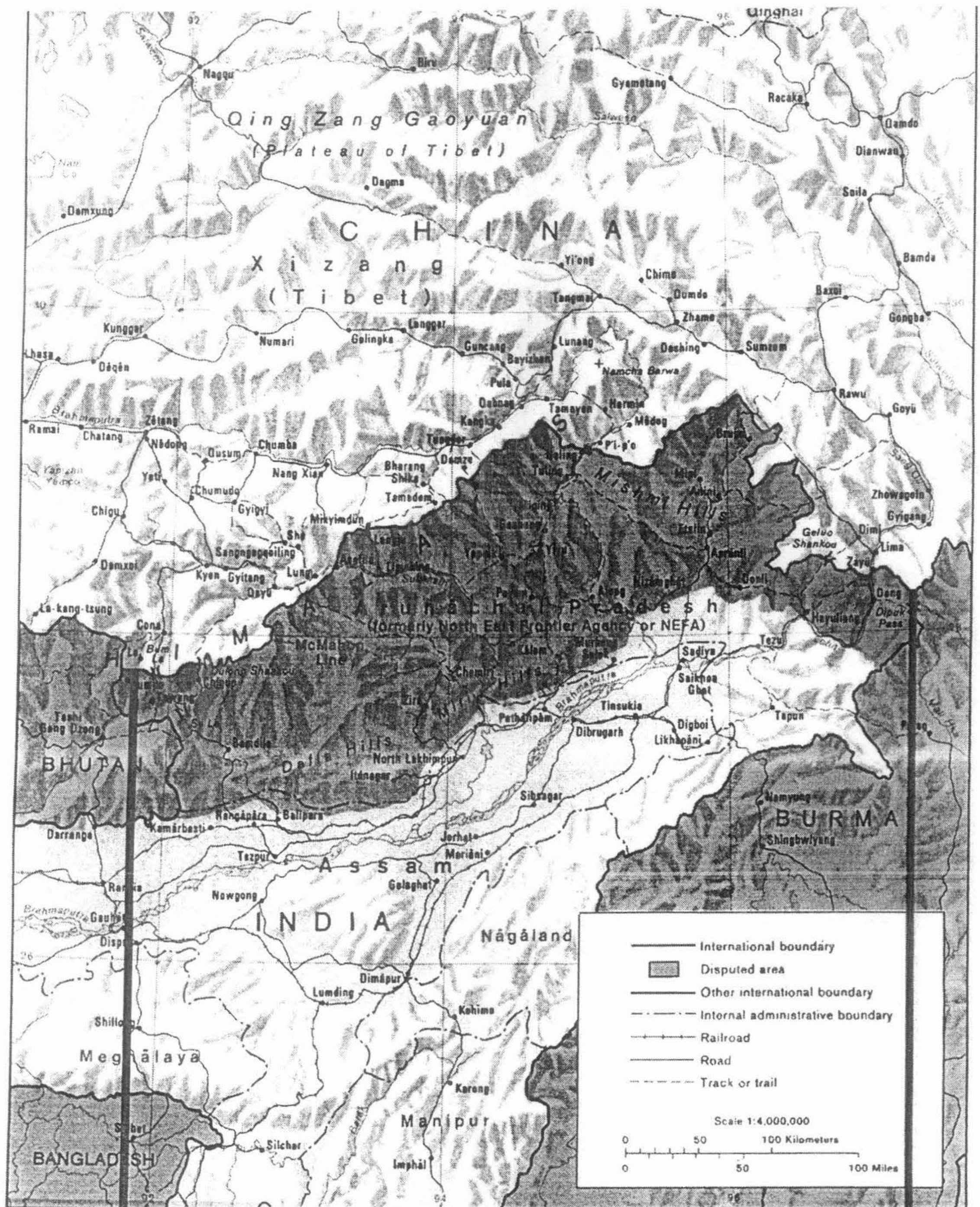


The Durand Line

Established through an agreement on 12 November 1893, the Durand Line served as the frontier between British India and Afghanistan till 1947. It became the international boundary between Afghanistan and the new state of Pakistan since.

http://www.worldpress.org/specials/pp/afghan_pak_border_map.htm

2.2: Map depicting the McMahon Line

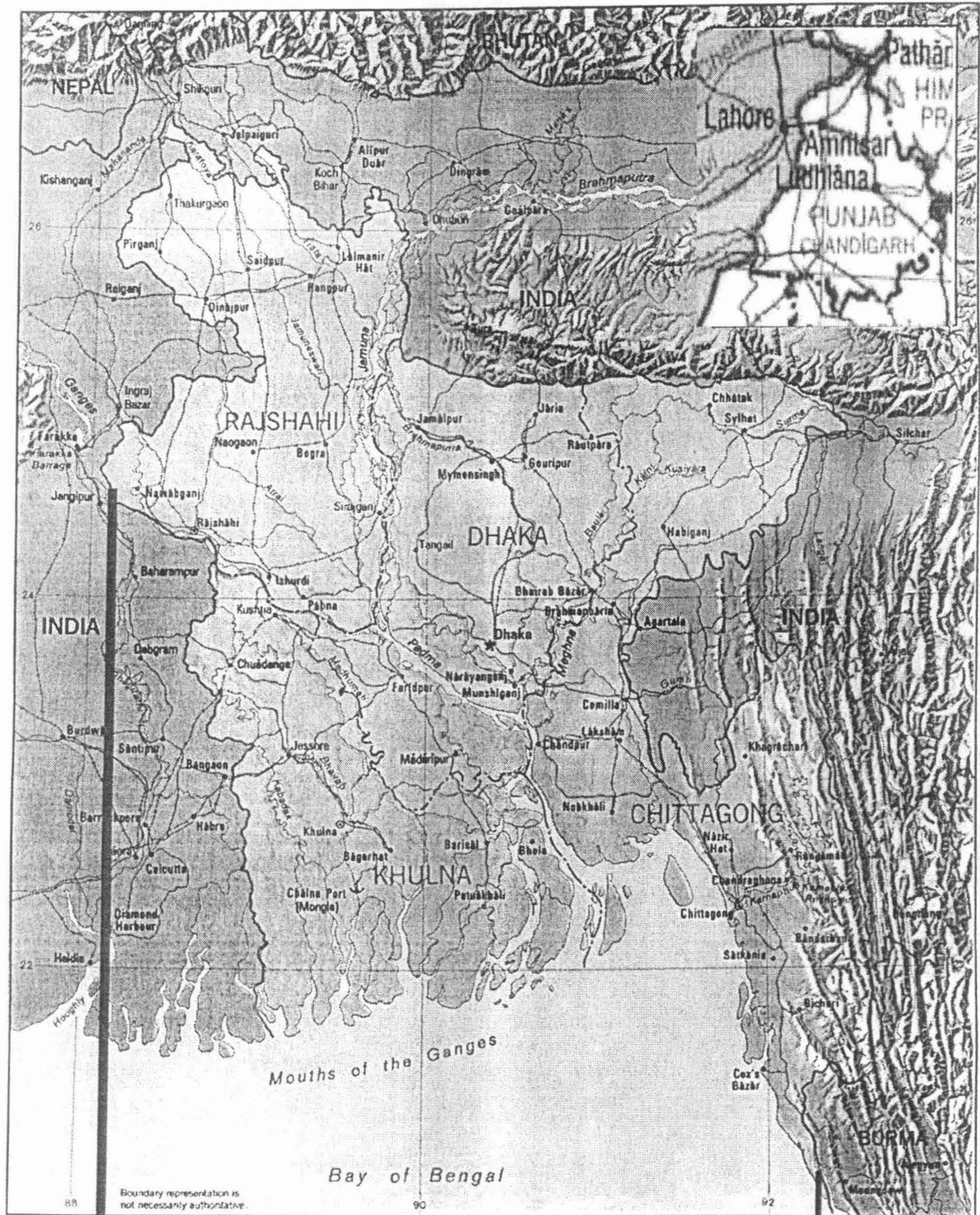


The McMahon Line.

The McMahon Line is the international boundary between India and China's Tibet Autonomous Region in the Eastern Sector. It is also the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh's external boundary. Henry McMahon, the foreign secretary of colonial India, negotiated it secretly with Tibet at the Simla Conference of 1913-14.

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_e_border_88.jpg

2.3: Map depicting the Radcliffe Lines



The Radcliffe Lines

The Radcliffe Awards of 1947 established two boundaries. In the west it divided the Punjab (see inset). In the east it formed the international boundary of India and Bangladesh (East Pakistan till 1971).

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/bangladesh_rel96.jpg

2.4: Map illustrating Imperial Territorial Expansion and Consolidation during the 18th, 19th and 20 centuries

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