

Agents of exception: border security and the marginalization of Muslims in India

Reece Jones

Department of Geography, University of Hawaii–Manoa, Honolulu, HI 96822, USA;
e-mail: reecej@hawaii.edu

Received 28 August 2008; in revised form 26 March 2009

Abstract. The narratives of fear and uncertainty from the discourse of the ‘global war on terror’ have been used by many governments to expand securitization processes. As more aggressive security tactics have been deployed, scholars have sought to understand the changing relationship between individual rights and the authority of sovereign states by drawing on Giorgio Agamben’s insights into the state of exception. In this paper I argue that borderlands are a key site for investigating the connections between the state of exception and securitization processes because political borders are the symbolic markers of the limits of a sovereign’s authority. I trace the securitization of the borderlands between India and Bangladesh and I describe the increasingly exceptional measures employed by Indian border security forces in order to prevent terrorist threats from entering India. At the intersection of the state of exception in the borderlands and the securitization narratives and practices of the global war on terror, Muslims in both India and Bangladesh are marginalized in the affairs of the state and targeted in state-sanctioned violence. I conclude that borderlands, as an explicitly spatial example of the state of exception, are a crucial site for locating and understanding the decision on the exception.

1 Introduction

On one of my last days of research in India, as I was passing an Indian Border Security Force (BSF) compound, I noticed a large banner that hung across the imposing wall of the facility.⁽¹⁾ BSF camps are ubiquitous on the Indian side of the border, providing a reminder that the state is operating in the borderlands to provide security for the population. Many smaller camps are within a few hundred meters of the border; however, there are also larger bases, like this one, that are several kilometers inside India. The banner hung beside two armed guards in formal military dress who stood at the gated entrance to the compound. It was above their reinforced guard post and just below lengths of barbed wire at the top of the wall. The message, written in large English letters, was simple: “BSF: Friend of border populace.” On the banner, there was a large photograph of a BSF soldier in an aggressive stance, apparently having just jumped over an obstacle. He was dressed in military fatigues, had both hands on an assault rifle held out in front of his body, and his dirty, camouflage-painted face was eternally caught in a war cry.

Although political borders have always been a key concern for the leaders of sovereign states, the narratives of fear and uncertainty that have characterized the discourse of the ‘global war on terror’ have allowed governments worldwide to rapidly accelerate securitization processes at their borders (Ackelson, 2005; Amooore, 2006; Jones, 2009; Sparke, 2006). The violent acts of 11 September 2001 in the United States,

⁽¹⁾ The research presented in this paper is drawn from fieldwork conducted in India and Bangladesh from August 2006 to April 2007. The data presented here are based on 101 in-depth interviews with borderland residents and discourse analyses of government documents and newspaper reports. The names, dates, and precise locations of the interviews are withheld because of the sensitive nature of the topic. The age, gender, religion (when appropriate for context), occupation, and citizenship of interviewees are provided. All interviews were originally in Bengali and translations were made by the author in collaboration with a research assistant in Bangladesh.

and subsequent events in India, Indonesia, Israel, Spain, and the United Kingdom, have led these governments to argue that there is a global war occurring between the free and democratic world and the terrorists who seek to destroy that system. They suggest that because they are fighting an unconventional enemy that has the capability to strike at any time and anywhere, governments need exceptional powers to prevent future attacks. The expanded powers that are now deemed necessary are achieved by either declaring a state of emergency—as Israel has done continuously since its creation in 1948, as the United States has done every year since 1995, and as India has done for decades in its restive northeastern region—or implementing legislation that allows the government to operate temporarily in an aggressive manner when fighting terrorism (Bush, 2007a; 2007b; Gregory, 2004; Hussain, 2003).⁽²⁾ These powers were put in place in the United States through the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 and in India through the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act of 2002 (Oza, 2007a). In India, these exceptional government powers were further institutionalized after the Congress Party rescinded the controversial emergency act in 2004, but concomitantly added many of the formerly *temporary* emergency powers to the *permanent* judicial system through the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment of 2004 (Singh, 2006). In order to understand the expansion of these aggressive government techniques, many scholars have turned to Giorgio Agamben's (1998; 2005) work on law and individual rights.

Agamben argues that a state of exception occurs during a time of emergency, when a sovereign authority suspends legal protections to individuals while wielding the violent power of the state against them. Agamben's earlier work argues that the state of exception is often manifested in the particular space of a camp, such as Nazi death camps during World War II, or contemporary American military installations such as Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. However, Agamben (2005) also suggests a more ominous formulation in which the state of exception is not limited to the camp, but, rather, is all-encompassing, where every individual is at risk of being stripped of his or her legal protections and could be taken outside of the law at any moment. As CIA black sites, extraordinary renditions, and the use of 'enhanced interrogation' tactics suggest, this permanent state of exception may already be the rule (Paglen, 2007). Indeed, Edkins and Pin-Fat (2004, page 9) argue: "[w]e have all become homines sacri or bare life in the face of a biopolitics that technologizes, administers, and depoliticizes, and thereby renders the political and power relations irrelevant." However, despite the evident expansion of sovereign power in the last decade, the notion that it is now an all-encompassing reality in which the state of exception could be enacted at any time, anywhere, and against anyone fails to adequately grasp how it is actually practiced. Sovereign power operates as a few particular agents of the state make the decision to target a few particular individuals for the exception, a process that occurs in a few particular places much more frequently than others. Therefore, a crucial task for understanding the state of exception is to identify the agents, the targets, and the spaces where the practice of sovereign power occurs.

In this paper I argue that borderlands are one of those spaces. I analyze how the tactics employed by the government of India to establish its sovereign authority along its border with Bangladesh have transformed the densely populated farmland into a space where there is a permanent state of exception.⁽³⁾ The 4096 km border was not

⁽²⁾ The 1995 state of emergency in the United States, enacted by then president Bill Clinton, was originally targeted towards individuals financing terrorism in the Middle East. It was expanded to include Al Qaeda and later the broader war on terror and is still in effect.

⁽³⁾ This paper focuses on the Indian government because it has been actively enforcing order at the border. The government of Bangladesh has resisted the border fencing project and appears to be content with an open border.

marked on the ground and did not follow any major preexisting political or physical boundaries when it was first created in the 1947 partition of British India (J Chatterji, 1999; S Chatterji, 1947). Along the over 2200 km section of the border between the Indian state of West Bengal and Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan), it divides a population that speaks the same language and has similar cultural traditions.⁽⁴⁾ Nevertheless, over the intervening sixty years, the border was surveyed and marked with stones, security forces were deployed, and, by the end of 2008, large sections were fenced by India (Jones, 2009; Kabir, 2005; Sullivan, 2007). After engaging with Agamben's theorization of the state of exception in section 2, the paper demonstrates how the securitization process in the Bengal borderlands created an exceptional space out of ordinary farmland as increasingly aggressive state interventions attempted to bring order to the area. Then, in the second half of the paper, I investigate contemporary security practices by drawing on interviews with borderland residents and data on violence at the border. I identify the border security forces as the agents of exception, the 'petty sovereigns' that make the decision on life and death every day (Butler, 2004) and I argue that at the intersection of the state of exception at the border and the exclusionary narratives of the 'global war on terror' Muslims, specifically, are targeted for state-sanctioned violence.

2 The state of exception

Agamben's writings on the role of the state of exception in the modern sovereign state system have been widely theorized in the years since the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States and the deployment of the discourse of the global war on terror to expand security practices in many different countries (Agamben, 1998; 2005; Edkins et al, 2004; Ek, 2006; Gregory, 2004; 2006; 2007; Kearns, 2007; Long, 2006; Minca, 2005; 2006; 2007; Neocleous, 2006; 2008; Pratt, 2005; Salter, 2003; 2006; 2007; 2008; Secor, 2007). Agamben analyzes ancient Roman law in order to introduce the concepts of the *homo sacer* and the state of exception, which, he argues, are the foundations of both democratic and authoritarian governments in the contemporary era. Drawing on Benjamin (1940), Foucault (1978), and Schmitt (1985; 1996), Agamben argues that sovereign power is based on the ability to declare a state of emergency that suspends the rule of law. The sovereign, as the body that creates and enforces laws, is able to operate both inside and outside the legal system simultaneously during a state of emergency. Agamben (1998) makes the distinction between a political citizen, who enjoys rights under the law, and what he terms the "bare life" of a *homo sacer*, when these guarantees are (literally and figuratively) stripped away. The *homo sacer* is the embodiment of the state of exception as an individual who is no longer protected by the law although still subjected to the violent consequences of it. The representation of terrorism, by many governments around the world, as a grave threat to national security that lacks a definite end provides the necessary justification for expanding these powers indefinitely. Although Neocleous (2006; 2008) argues, effectively, that the current emergency declarations of the global war on terror do not represent a new historical period but, rather, are only the latest example of a long-term trend, what is important about the discourse of the global war on terror is that it appears to have succeeded in creating the necessary environment where fear and uncertainty do justify indefinitely extending these emergency powers. The event provided the necessary affect to reorder the status quo (Davis, 2001; Klein, 2007; Ó Tuathail, 2003).

⁽⁴⁾ The border does divide the population in terms of religion. The population of Bangladesh is approximately 89.5% Muslim and 9.8% Hindu. India's population is 80.4% Hindu and 13.5% Muslim. West Bengal has a higher percentage of Muslims than the rest of India with 72.5% Hindu and 25% Muslim. At the time of partition, many areas had much more equal percentages; however, cross-border migration has resulted in the current percentages.

This expansion of sovereign power has led some theorists to suggest that the state of exception is increasingly a global fact (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2004). It is evident that many sovereign states have expanded their ability to conduct surveillance and security operations within their territory while simultaneously decreasing oversight by the public and the courts (Gregory, 2004; Gregory and Pred, 2007; Singh, 2006). However, the claim of an all-encompassing state of exception is not helpful for theorizing sovereign power because it creates an impasse (Connolly, 2004). An all-encompassing sovereign power is potentially everywhere, but also at any given moment nowhere. Beyond the unique space of the camp, the places where sovereign power actually operates are indistinct and unpredictable. Without being able to locate where sovereign power is, who is carrying it out, and what actions are triggering the decision on violence, it is impossible to properly analyze its practice. Furthermore, the claim that we are all already living in an all-encompassing state of exception seems to overlook the reality that there is not a single sovereign in the world. Rather, the territory of the world is partitioned between many sovereign authorities who employ differential tactics to manage particular populations (Butler, 2004; Elden, 2007). Consequently, political borders, where these sovereignty practices rub up against each other, emerge as key sites to respatialize and locate the state of exception (Salter, 2006; 2008).

Sovereign power, of course, does not operate only at the border. People are categorized and sorted in many aspects of everyday life, which mark some bodies as acceptable and others as a threat to the stability of society. The recent expansion of sovereign power has involved a sustained effort to do border work well away from the border itself through visa requirements, biometric passports, and immigration policing inside the territory of the state (Amoore, 2006; Butler, 2004; Nevins, 2001; Salter, 2008; Vaughan-Williams, 2007). Additionally, in practice, political borders rarely contain the violent actions of a sovereign power, which is often able to project power beyond its territory as the United States' invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate.

Nevertheless, political borders are crucially important symbolic spaces because the narratives that legitimate sovereign power are predicated on claiming tight linkages between the territory, the people, and the state (DeCaroli, 2007; Murphy, 1996). Although the border represents the margins of the sovereign's authority, it is not marginal to it; instead, the performance of sovereignty at the border creates, reproduces, and expands the claim to authority over that territory. This idea of a sovereign state as a closed container with strictly regulated borders that prevent all unauthorized movement is rarely, if ever, actually practiced. Instead, unmarked, fluid borders display the cracks and fissures in the narrative of the sovereign state and become spaces that require substantial security and patrolling to create the perception of absolute sovereign authority (Kaiser and Nikiforova, 2006; Van Schendel, 2005). Security is performed at the border by building barriers, conducting patrols, and establishing checkpoints. When the reification of the border is challenged, authority is imposed by force through searches, interrogations, detentions, and death. The state of exception, therefore, beyond its manifestation in the form of the camp, is most obvious today at the margins of the sovereign state political system in the borderlands, a space that is fundamental to both the sovereignty and the security of the state. It is not surprising, then, that, as the affective fear generated by the discourse of the global war on terror allowed for a consolidation of power, many sovereign states initiated or expanded border security projects (Andreas and Biesticker, 2003; Jones, 2009; Kabir, 2005).

Indeed, this point has been made by Salter (2006; 2008), who argues that governments utilize political borders and visa regimes that restrict mobility to create

and enforce their sovereign authority through the biopolitics of submission and confession. Salter (2008) contends that at the border checkpoint everyone is reduced to bare life as they submit to the authority of the state to make a decision on their existence as a political citizen. I also argue that political borders are clear examples of the state of exception; but I make the point in a fundamentally different way. The residents of the borderlands of India and Bangladesh have not made the decision to go to the border and submit to the authority of the state. Most live their lives far from the official border crossing. Instead, the state of exception came to them as the governments of India and Bangladesh increasingly exercised their ability to violently impose their authority at the political border. Therefore, the borderlands emerge as a space where the state of exception can be located and the particular bodies, and specific actions, which trigger the decision on the exception can be understood (DeCaroli, 2007; Doty, 2007).

3 Securitizing the Bengal borderlands

The borderlands between the Indian state of West Bengal and Bangladesh provide the ideal site to investigate the border securitization process both historically and as part of the discourse of the global war on terror. At the time of the partition of British India, the areas of the province of Bengal that became the borderlands between India and Bangladesh were only marginally under the authority of the newly created countries. The British colonial government preferred to rule from a distance through calculation rather than engaging in the daily lives of the vast majority of the population (Crampton and Elden, 2006; Legg, 2006). The narrative construction of the border and the drawing of a line on a map were not enough to bring the new border into existence. Instead, sovereignty was imposed through enactments of security and bordering practices as the imagined line drawn in the summer of 1947 was slowly inscribed onto the landscape (Rose, 2002; Rumley and Minghi, 1991). This section describes the securitization of the Bengal borderlands over the last sixty years as border stones were laid in the 1950s, security forces were established in the 1960s, and, in the last five years, a barbed wire fence was constructed to prevent unauthorized movement across the border. In the process, the farmland on both sides of the border has become an exceptional space (see figure 1).

The border between India and Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) was drawn by a commission led by Sir Cyril Radcliffe during a three-week period in the summer of 1947 (Chatterji, 1999). Radcliffe was unfamiliar with the region and was simply instructed to place Hindu majority areas in India and Muslim majority areas in Pakistan. Several of the prepartition districts in the province of Bengal had roughly equal-sized populations of each religious community, which posed significant difficulties for the commission (Chatterji, 1947). In order to solve this problem, the new border often did not follow the boundaries of administrative districts, but, rather, split the districts along *Thana* boundaries, which mark the jurisdictions of different police stations. Consequently, the new international border was drawn through many areas that were previously hundreds of kilometers from an international border and even many kilometers away from a district boundary. Rivers flow into and out of each country, some villages are cut in half, and many urban centers are partitioned off from their traditional rural constituencies. Prior to 1947, these *Thana* boundaries were not marked on the ground and for several decades after partition the densely populated areas along the new international border continued to operate as they had before, with people crossing the border to work, go to the market, visit relatives, and arrange marriages.

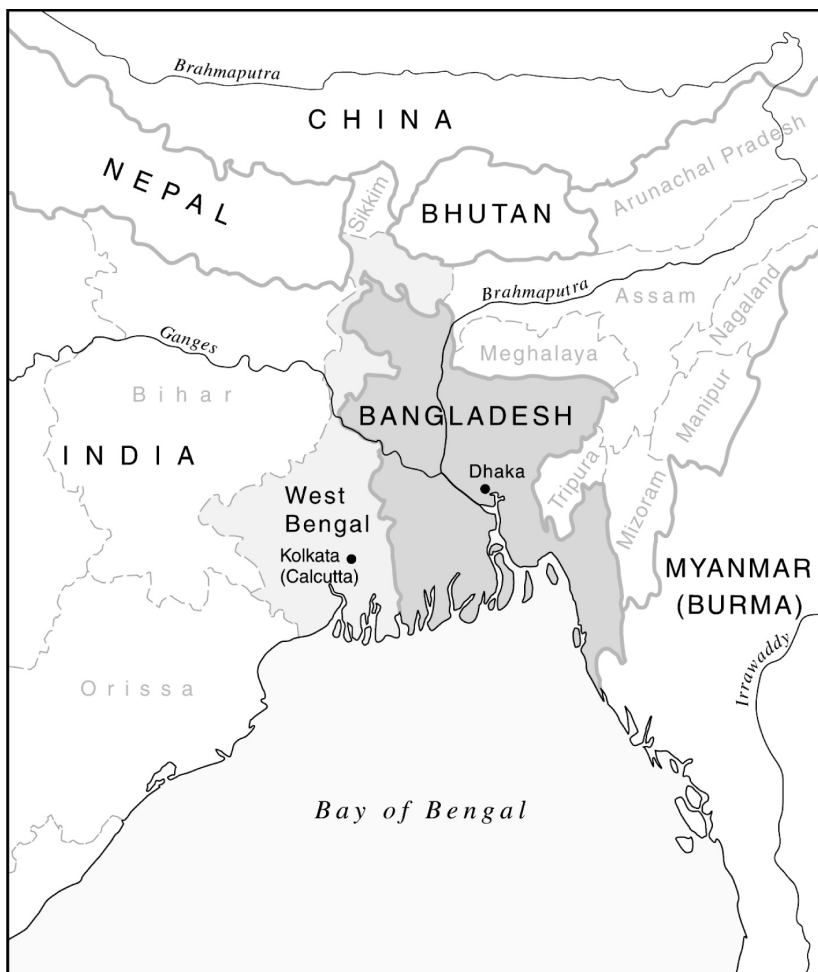


Figure 1. Contemporary political borders of West Bengal and Bangladesh.

The relationship between India and Pakistan was adversarial from the start and after wars in 1947 and 1965 the leadership in both countries realized that their borders needed to be normalized and secured (Ganguly, 2002). An important part of this process in India was the creation of a new security force that had the sole task of patrolling and securing the borders of the state. The Border Security Force (BSF) (2004) was established in 1965 with its primary duties as follows.

(a) Peacetime:

1. Promote a sense of security among the people living in the border areas.
2. Prevent transborder crimes and unauthorized entry into or exit from the territory of India.
3. Prevent smuggling and any other illegal activity.

(b) War time:

1. Hold ground in less threatened sectors.
2. Protect vital installations.
3. Assist in the control of refugees.
4. Carry out anti-infiltration duties in specified areas.

Although by the time of writing, in 2008, the Indian BSF has almost 200 000 members, the task of securing India's borders is still immense (<http://bsf.nic.in>). India has over 14 000 km of international borders and it shares the longest section—at just over 4000 km—with Bangladesh.⁽⁵⁾ On the Bangladesh border, the BSF is deployed in 714 small border outposts that are on average 5.5 km apart. There are three agents on duty at each post for 6-hour shifts, 24 hours a day (Kabir, 2005). However, even these deployments mean that each agent is responsible for an almost 2 km stretch of border that runs through some of the most densely populated rural areas of the world.

In addition to marking the border line with stones in the 1950s and deploying border security forces in the late 1960s, there were discussions in India for many years about fencing the border. The construction of a fence was strongly supported in the Indian state of Assam, where immigration across the border threatened to overwhelm the relatively small local population (Sammadar, 1999). The Indian parliament authorized a fencing project in 1986 but the construction of the fence was slow because of the high cost and resistance in the state of West Bengal, which maintained cultural and social connections with Bangladesh (Van Schendel, 2005). However, in the past seven years, the fencing project was substantially expanded and, by 2008, the vast majority of the border was fenced (Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, 2008; Jones, 2009).

Despite the large contingent of border guards and the new barbed wire fence, the borderlands are still not an empty demilitarized zone. The term 'no-man's-land' (sic) does not apply because all of the land along the border is owned by hundreds of thousands of small-scale farmers (Buerk, 2006). Indeed, the fencing project has made the situation much worse for Indian farmers near the border because the fence was built 150 m back from the actual border. This was done to comply with the 1974 Indira–Mujib treaty, which prohibited both governments from building any permanent military or defensive structures within 150 m of the border (Kabir, 2005). This buffer zone is not wholly controlled by either state but is still under the purview of the security forces in the area.

Indian farmers whose land is in this zone are able to access their land only through gates that are operated by BSF guards. Although the government has not released official data, it has also been estimated that 65 000 citizens of India live in the 150 m buffer zone and are forced to pass through gates in order to get from their homes back to mainland India (Kabir, 2005) (see figure 2). The situation at the gates echoes Salter's (2006; 2008) arguments about the biopolitics of submission and confession before the state. In order to work on their farmland, the Indian borderland residents must submit to the authority of the border guards to render a decision on their political citizenship. The gates I visited were open daily from 7:00–8:00am, 11:00am–1:00pm, and 4:00pm–5:00pm. It is impossible to pass through, legally, at any other time. Bodies that enter the space of the border zone at other times, or without submitting to the authority of the state, risk a unilateral decision on their status as a political citizen. In total, the border fence on the Bangladesh border has partitioned off 600 km² of Indian territory, which is almost twice the size of the Gaza Strip in Palestine.⁽⁶⁾

A 46-year-old Hindu male farmer in India, whose house is directly beside the border fence, but on the Indian side, describes his experiences.

⁽⁵⁾ The lengths of each section of India's border are: Bangladesh 4096 km, Bhutan 605 km, Burma 1463 km, China 3380 km, Nepal 1690 km, Pakistan 2912 km (sources: Kabir, 2005; Van Schendel, 2005).

⁽⁶⁾ The Gaza strip is 360 km².



Figure 2 [In color online, see <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/d10108>] The 150 m zone. This photograph is taken from Bangladesh looking into India. In the foreground, a border stone is visible, which marks the official border. In the background, the fence and a BSF tower can be seen. In the zone are several farmers, presumably from India (photograph taken by the author, September, 2006).

Question: “Is it a problem living this close to the border?”

Answer: “It is not a problem. Actually it is good because the BSF built this road [the road that runs along the border fence] to our house. Before they built that there was no road at all. But it is inconvenient because we have a lot of land on the other side of the fence. Before, we could just walk over to it. Then they built the fence but it had a gate that was open all the time. Then later the BSF took our names in order to cross. Your name had to be on an approved list. After that they said you had to show your ration card. Now they have to have your photo on file if you want to go through the gate and it is only open four hours a day. It is very difficult.”

Q: “Do you know the people on the Bangladeshi side?”

A: “Of course. Just a few years ago there was not a fence at all so you could just walk over. If they needed help in the fields we went, if we needed help they came. Now that connection has been broken.”

A 60-year-old male local politician in Bangladesh, whose house is in the village just across the border from the Indian farmer, has also felt the changes brought by the increased securitization of the borderland areas over the last ten years:

“I don’t think I will live in this area much longer. Ten years ago things were very good near the border. It was peaceful and you could come and go as you please. Then five years ago the BSF and BDR [Bangladesh Rifles] began restricting things more. Then last year they built the barrier. We are facing hardships. Things have changed so much in the past ten years I am worried about how bad they will be ten years from now.”

The average life expectancy of a resident of West Bengal is 66 years. Therefore, an average 66-year-old farmer, who was born in a village on the boundary between Birampur and Kumarganj Thanas in 1943, lived the first four years of her life hundreds

of kilometers from an international border. Then, in 1947, she found herself living directly beside a political border, but one that was unmarked and unenforced—only a line on a map imagined in a distant capital. Over her lifetime she saw survey crews come to mark the border with stones, border security forces come to patrol the area, and, in the past five years, a barbed wire fence built, which partitions her land off from the rest of India. In the process, the borderlands have become an increasingly exceptional space where simply entering the 300 m zone around the border could put your life at risk.

4 The agents of exception

Despite the attempt by the Indian government to bring order to the Bengal borderlands, the imposition of absolute sovereignty at the border has still been prevented by the density of the population on both sides, the common language, the similarities in the appearance of the borderland residents, the hundreds of gates in the fence, and the legitimate reasons many farmers have for entering the 300 m buffer zone. Consequently, the border guards who patrol the borderlands are given enormous authority to decide who can legitimately be in that zone, an authority that has been expanded in the aftermath of a series of violent terrorist attacks inside India in recent years.⁽⁷⁾

The BSF border guards are imbued with the notion that the borderlands are an exceptional space where order must be established through force. They are what Butler (2004, page 56) calls the “petty sovereigns” of governmentality, who “are delegated with the power to render unilateral decisions, accountable to no law.” Rather than having a strong sense of law and order, the guards operate outside the law, where their actions in defense of the sovereignty of the country have few consequences. The BSF Acts and Rules codify this system in which any order given by a superior officer to “safeguard the security of India” is legal:

“(5) Any member of the force shall be liable to perform any duties in connection with the safeguarding of the security of the border of India, the administration, discipline and welfare of the Force and such other duties as he may be called upon to perform in accordance with any law for the time being in force and any order given in this behalf by a superior officer shall be a lawful command for the purposes of the Act” (BSF, 2004, page 75).

The ability to legalize any action by having a superior officer command it results in the tyranny over border residents, whose killing is justifiable if they appear to be a threat to the security of India (Vaughan-Williams, 2007). Because the border guards are able to act without substantial oversight from other government officials or police, the borderlands become a zone where their decisions are the only things that matter.

An encounter I had with a BDR officer illustrates the exceptional space of the borderlands. I was near the border conducting an interview when I was briefly detained by two border guards. While interrogating me, the officer felt the need to emphasize the exceptional nature of the borderlands and his unlimited power to act with impunity in that space:

“I am the *mastan* of the border. The chairman [who I was interviewing] is not the *mastan* of the border. The *mastan* of the interior is the police, not me. ... If I arrest you as a spy, who will save you? ... I am BDR. I have a uniform on. Everybody knows I am BDR. I have a weapon but no license for it. All arms that BDR have are weapons outside of the law. ... My license is my dress.”

⁽⁷⁾ Bangladesh does have a security force, the BDR, which is posted along the border. The BDR is smaller in size and not as well equipped as the BSF. The government of Bangladesh has opposed the fencing project but has little recourse after India's decision to build it 150 m back from the border. The role of the BDR is largely to monitor the BSF's actions.

I left the term '*mastan*' in Bengali because its usage here provides an incisive view into the role border security forces play in the imposition of the sovereignty of the state in the borderlands. It is very surprising that the officer uses '*mastan*' to describe himself because it always has a negative connotation in Bengali. '*Mastan*' refers to thugs or enforcers used by a gangster—they are the muscle sent out by a mob boss to rough up or kill someone who is out of line. This is a shocking thing for a border guard to call himself. However, if you consider that the role of the border guards is to enforce the sovereignty of the state in a space that is at the limits of the law, it makes a lot more sense. Indeed, as the border security forces operate in a permanent state of exception, '*mastan*' describes exactly what they do. Just as the mob boss uses the *mastan* to enforce obedience and establish who is in charge, the border security forces are the thugs of the state: muscle used to control people who are out of line and whose actions threaten the notion of state sovereignty and authority.

As the agents of the state, the border guards are the ones who make the decision on the existence of a factual danger in the borderlands. Hussain (2003, page 16) points out that "[t]he notion that a situation of factual danger, whereby the existence of the state is threatened, allows for the suspension of the normative universe of a rule of law is provided for in almost every account of modern lawful rule." While every legal code provides for this suspension, what is less clear is how the agents of the state determine that a particular situation represents a factual danger to the state (Doty, 2007). Indeed, DeCaroli (2007, page 46, emphasis in original) critiques Agamben's theorization of the state of exception specifically for this lacuna:

"[What is] left unaddressed is why these actions, and *these* actions in particular, call for exceptional measures. Exactly what forms of subjectivity and their associated behaviors elicit non-traditional punitive responses from the state? Why, instead of conventional forms of punishment, do certain forms of political life warrant exile?" The border provides an important site for locating the individuals making the decision on the exception and for understanding what triggered the decision (Salter, 2006). Transgressing the border, and exposing the fiction of the coterminous nation, state, and territory, is undoubtedly one of these actions, but not the only action.

In pursuit of security in the borderlands, it appears that the BSF does not distinguish between the different conditions at each of India's borders or between the legitimate and illegitimate reasons an individual might have for entering the border zone. Instead, any transgression of the border can result in being categorized as a potential factual threat to the state. On the official BSF website (<http://bsf.nic.in>), a table of "achievements" states that in the seven years from 2000 to 2006 the BSF killed 1175 "militant/extremists" at the borders of India. In the same period, it detained an additional 1306 militants/extremists. The BSF data do not differentiate between the western border with Pakistan, where there is an ongoing insurgency in Kashmir, the eastern border with Bangladesh, or India's other borders with Bhutan, Burma, China, and Nepal. Undoubtedly, many of these killings and detentions occurred on the Pakistan border, but the failure to distinguish between the different borders results in the perception that the conditions on each of the borders are the same and the BSF's policies should be the same.

The physical geographies of the Bangladesh and Pakistan borders are dramatically different: the Bangladesh border runs through densely populated farmland whereas long stretches of the Pakistan border are in sparsely populated deserts and high mountain ranges. On the Pakistan border, an individual who approaches the border can legitimately be viewed with suspicion. Conversely, on the Bangladesh border, there are hundreds of thousands of farmers whose livelihood depends on them entering the border zone every day to work their fields.

Additionally, because the Bengal borderlands were securitized only very recently, there are many economic and social connections that remain across the border. The same table on the BSF website indicates that the BSF has evidently caught many smugglers, which lists 9.4 billion rupees (US\$230 million) of seized contraband over the same seven-year period. What is unclear is how the BSF makes the decision on whether someone is a smuggler or a militant/extremist. The table does not have a category that documents the number of smugglers captured. There is also not a separate category in the BSF's data for illegal immigrants who were detained at the border. Recent Indian censuses have demonstrated that the population in West Bengal has been growing much faster than could be accounted for by the birthrate alone. It has been estimated that there are somewhere between 10 million and 20 million Bangladeshi living in India (Mitra, 2004; Samadhar, 1999). How are they classified when they are detained at the border?

Of course, it is also the BSF's duty to prevent smuggling and illegal immigration into India. However, there are many other individuals who cross the Bengal border, in both directions, to simply visit family, attend weddings, or go to festivals on the other side. After the massive population movements that followed the 1947 partition and the 1971 Bangladesh independence movement, almost every family has relatives on the other side of the border (Rahman and Van Schendel, 2003). For most people, the easiest, fastest, and cheapest way to cross is illegally, using traffickers. The BSF statistics, however, do not make any distinction between these other reasons for crossing the border and, instead, appear to categorize everyone who is detained along the border as a militant/extremist. Although many individuals have legitimate—and illegitimate, but not militant—reasons to be in the buffer zone, it has become a space of exception where at any moment they could be detained or shot without any questions being asked. They are treated as a threat to the sovereignty of the Indian state and their lives become expendable: a *homo sacer* whose life is not worth anything.

5 Muslim borderland residents

It turns out, however, that simply transgressing the border is not enough to elicit the decision on the exception. Instead, the expansive powers accorded to border security forces, along with the mandate to prevent Islamic terrorist attacks in India, create a space in the borderlands where Muslim citizens of Bangladesh and India live with constant suspicion, surveillance, and the threat of government-sanctioned violence. Originally, the principle duties of the BSF on the Bengal border were only the prevention of smuggling and illegal immigration. While the Indian military and the BSF have been fighting insurgents in Kashmir for almost twenty years, the Bengal border was relatively peaceful and lacked a militant threat. However, in the past seven years, India has been the target of several major attacks that have been linked to the broader global war on terror (Jones, 2009). The most recent example, the horrific siege in Mumbai in November 2008, played out on television screens around the world; but in the past three years there were also major bombings in Ahmedabad, Delhi, Guwahati, Hyderabad, and Mumbai (Buncombe, 2007; Kumar, 2005; Rai and Sengupta, 2006; Sengupta, 2008; Shankar, 2008). All of these previous attacks were linked in government statements and media reports to extremist organizations operating in Bangladesh; as the *Times of India* reported on the Ahmedabad bombing, "Bangladesh is emerging as the deadly link to the bloody affair" (Nag, 2008). In the wake of these attacks, the role of the BSF, as the guardians of India's borders, was reimagined as the first line of defense in the prevention of terrorism in India (<http://bsf.nic.in>). As part of that mandate, the BSF also began conducting counterinsurgency and security operations within India against suspected terrorist organizations. In the Bengal borderlands, this shifted the focus of

the guards from smuggling and illegal immigration to preventing security breaches that could result in another attack.

Reports of Bangladeshis being killed, wounded, or abducted by the BSF in borderland areas are a routine part of the daily news in Bangladesh. Although the Bangladeshi media uniformly describe the individuals as innocent farmers, many of those killed are undoubtedly engaged in smuggling or other illegal activities. Nevertheless, the number of Bangladeshis killed by the BSF in the borderlands is staggering. During the month of September 2006 I analyzed a single Bangladeshi newspaper by noting each article that referenced the BSF.⁽⁸⁾ Out of the 30 days that month, there were 24 days with articles that included information about the BSF. Most articles were short, usually well inside the paper, telling the story of another border resident killed by the BSF. Here is a typical article from 23 September 2006:

“Border Security Force (BSF) of India gunned down a Bangladeshi farmer near Bamandanga border under Sapahar upazila of Naogaon district yesterday morning. The victim was identified as Johurul Haque, 36, son of Tomsuruddin of frontier Maiksadanga village. According to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police, the Indian border guards of Sotrahati camp under 172 BSF Battalion opened fire on Johurul while he was working on his cropland near the border at about 7:00am. He died instantly. Immediately after the incident, the BSF men took away the body. On information, BDR personnel of 28 Rifles Battalion rushed to the spot and sent a letter to the BSF authorities, asking them to hand over the body. The BSF did not respond as of 6:00pm yesterday” (*The Daily Star* 2006e).

The most disturbing aspect of these stories is their banality. In fact, it appears that, because the killings have become a normal, daily story, the newspaper has created a template that allows the reporter to change only the name, the location, and the reason the deceased went close to the border. “Zahurul Islam, 35, Shahid Mian, 45, and Ganon Marak, 44... went there to collect firewood in the afternoon” (*The Daily Star* 2006h); “Mohammad Mujibur Rahman, 45, and Shaheb Ali, 30... were irrigating their farmland” (2006a); “Babu, 26... was shot while walking along the border at 5:00am” (2006g); “Yusef Ali, 18... was cutting grass near the border at 3:00pm” (2006f); “Moniruzzaman, 32... was working on cropland at 6:00am” (2006d); “Uzzal, 26... went to his field” (2006c); “Abdus Samand, 25, and Moyub Ali, 20, went to collect firewood” (2006b); “Amir Hossain, 25... was run over by BSF soldiers in a speedboat while he was crossing the Ichhamoti River with cattle” (2006i); and “Ansar, 40, ... went near border pillar 75 at 5:00am... to answer the call of nature” (2006c).

In almost every case, the residents of Bangladesh are described as engaging in quotidian activities and the BSF border guards are portrayed as firing indiscriminately on innocent farmers, then hiding the body and the evidence. The BDR, after rushing to the spot, is only left to petition to the BSF to act properly next time. There are never follow-up articles that describe the aftermath, what happens to the body, or whether the BSF soldiers are reprimanded. Instead, it is treated as the normal situation in the borderlands. In total, according to the reports in the single newspaper during the month of September 2006, eighteen residents of Bangladesh were killed by BSF soldiers near the border with India. Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights organization, reported

⁽⁸⁾ *The Daily Star* was chosen for this analysis for several reasons. First, it has the highest circulation of the many English-language daily papers in Bangladesh and is operated by the same company that publishes the *Prothom Alo*, the Bengali-language paper with the widest circulation (WARC, 2007). Second, although both papers operate independently of political parties, they are perceived to have a center-left orientation. This is opposed to some of the more Islamic-leaning papers that are vehemently anti-Indian. Therefore, the representations of violence at the border cannot be understood as simply anti-Indian propaganda.

that, between 2000 and 2005, 461 Bangladeshi citizens were killed by the BSF along the border (*The Independent* 2006). The rate has apparently increased, with over 120 BSF killings reported through the first seven months of 2008 (Ejaz, 2008).

It is very likely that many of these individuals were not simply innocent bystanders near the border, as the Bangladeshi press describes them, but, rather, were engaged in illegal activities. Indeed, an agenda item at a BSF–BDR meeting in 2005 was “distortion of facts of news published in Bangladeshi media” (*The Daily Star* 2005). However, the 300 m buffer zone is still farmland and there are hundreds of thousands of farmers whose livelihood depends on them entering that zone and conducting legitimate work every day. Agamben (1998, page 79) writes:

“One of the paradoxes of the state of exception lies in the fact that in the state of exception, it is impossible to distinguish transgression of the law from execution of the law, such that which violates a rule and what conforms to it coincide without any remainder (a person who goes for a walk during the curfew is not transgressing the law any more than the soldier who kills him is executing it).”

Even if all of these individuals who were killed were engaged in smuggling, which should be determined through an adjudicative process, the punishment for the crime is not the death penalty. India reserves the death penalty for the “rarest of rare cases”, which includes only murder, gang robbery with murder, abetting the suicide of a child or insane person, abetting mutiny by a member of the armed forces, and waging war against the government (Majumder, 2005). Furthermore, the security forces of both countries have agreed that anyone caught crossing the border—irrespective of the reason, whether as a smuggler, as an immigrant, or to visit relatives—should simply be detained and returned to his or her country of origin (Van Schendel, 2005, page 305). However, the actions of the BSF suggest that it is unable, or unwilling, to distinguish whether an individual in the borderlands is a legitimate farmer, an illegal smuggler, or a terrorist who intends to carry out an attack. Consequently, the border guards appear to treat many individuals who enter the space of the border as if they are waging war against the government and carry out the sentence of death accordingly.

The exceptional actions of the BSF border guards are not limited to aggressive measures against Muslim residents of Bangladesh—all eighteen people killed in the August 2006 newspaper reports were Muslims—in the 300 m zone at the border. Instead, the violent actions of the borderlands fold over into normal, everyday life as Muslim citizens of India are also targeted by the BSF. It is in the daily interactions of normal life that the performative effect of difference is established through iterative interactions that sediment particular hierarchical power relations in society (Butler, 1990; 1993).

Although the 1947 partition was meant to create Pakistan as a country for Muslims and to create India as a country for Hindus and other groups, it never came close to homogenizing the populations on either side. There are, of course, over 150 million Muslims inside India who are citizens and subject to its legal protections. The Indian state of West Bengal alone has a population of 20 million Muslims (Census of India, 2001). As Hazarika (1999, pages 140–141) points out, many residents of India struggle with negotiating the distinction between Muslim terrorists, Muslim illegal immigrants, and Muslim citizens of India:

“Too often, one meets with academics and journalists, officials and politicians in this country [India], especially in the North-East, who are absolutely convinced that every Bengali-speaking Muslim is an illegal migrant who has come over into the area in the past decade or so.”

In the Bengal borderlands, Indian Hindus are quick to make a distinction between local Muslims, who are narrated as part of Indian society, and 'foreign' Muslims, who are attempting to damage India. A 25-year-old Hindu male Internet shop owner in an Indian border town explains:

"There [in Bangladesh] the majority of the people are Muslim and here the majority of the people are Hindu. We do not match with them. We look at Muslims differently and they look at us differently. Those who are living locally are okay, but those living abroad, in other countries, we do not prefer them."

Although borderland residents often describe this distinction between good, local Muslims and bad, foreign Muslims, it is difficult in practice to operate this way, particularly when the local Muslims and the Muslims from Bangladesh speak the same language, dress the same way, and follow the same customs.

Consequently, despite the inclusive rhetoric towards local Muslim citizens, many Indian Muslims feel marginalized in the affairs of the state (Oza, 2007b). A 70-year-old Muslim male retired teacher in India describes the ease with which Hindu immigrants have been accepted into society while Muslim residents, who have always lived in the area, are still in subordinate positions:

"Those Hindus who came here as refugees [from East Pakistan/Bangladesh], they have gotten jobs, they are part of the culture, everything. If you compare Muslims with them, Muslims are not getting a fair share. Today in West Bengal Muslims are 28% of the population. We hope that if 100 people are hired for a job, 28 should be Muslim. But that does not happen here. What is the ratio? For the 30 years the Congress Party was in power, probably 7% of service holders were Muslim. Now under the CPIM [Communist Party of India – Marxist], it has declined to 1.5 or 2%. This is the current situation. So now the question arises 'how are we doing here?' In terms of religion and our way of life we are okay, but we are excluded from economic and political opportunities."⁽⁹⁾

The marginalization of Muslims in India extends beyond the economic and political spheres as they are often targeted for violence and harassment by the BSF border guards, who are imbued with the notion that their primary task is to prevent Muslim terrorist infiltration into India.

An 80-year-old retired Muslim man, who has lived his entire life in the same village in what is today West Bengal, describes a recent experience with the BSF:

Question: "These stories are all from long ago. But what about today? What is the situation for Muslims in March 2007 [the month of the interview]?"

Answer: "One problem happened three months ago. A husband and wife were coming from the other side [Bangladesh] and the BSF or someone, who knows, raped her. The husband was running through here and in front of this house there were some young men. They went there, freed the girl, and brought her here. The boys also slapped the BSF soldier. Later the situation was bad. It was in the evening after prayers around 8 or 8:15. At that time a few BSF came into my house. They went in every house. They hit me on the chest with the butt of their rifles. When they hit me I fell down. Later I got up and I heard my younger son's wife crying. The BSF came in the house and threatened us. At the time we were painting my house, and the painter hid under the bed at my other house. He was wounded as well. Other people like the Madrassah teacher were beaten. They beat him and broke his leg. Other things happened, they beat other people too. This oppression happened in our area. Here the administration became involved. Several officials and high ranking police, even high ranking BSF officials, came here. Through an

⁽⁹⁾ These are his statistics, not official ones.

inquiry, the next day the Hili border was closed. In India a *hartal* [general strike] was called and there was a meeting in the area. Human rights officials came here. The MP and other high officials came. This happened. Later they realized they had made a mistake. Now there is a case pending but it is not possible to say what will happen. The administration helped us and they realized that it was an illegal thing that happened. What happened, it happened at the border, but the reaction came to one village and into people's houses, what is this?"

This type of excess has become the norm for many Muslims in West Bengal. The Asian Human Rights Commission, which documents human rights violations across the region, regularly reports on the violence perpetrated by BSF soldiers against Indian citizens. In 2006 it documented eleven cases of BSF soldiers committing violent crimes against Indian citizens, all of whom were Muslim (<http://www.ahrcuk.net/index.php>). This tally is incomplete because the event described above is not mentioned on the Commission's list, although it occurred in late 2006 and was reported in the Indian media.

When these events are reported in the public sphere, the BSF soldiers are reprimanded and politicians publicly voice outrage and promise a full investigation. However, at least in the case of the 80-year-old Muslim man, nothing else came of it. Van Schendel (2005, page 1) relates a similar story where a rickshaw puller and a BSF truck had a dispute over right of way that resulted in five local residents being shot and killed. A member of parliament raised the issue in Delhi, which resulted in this response from the Deputy Speaker of the Indian Parliament:

"We are proud of our [border guards] and other Forces. The Members [of Parliament] cannot irresponsibly utter anything and everything on the Forces... I will not allow you to say anything more.... Nothing will go on the record."⁽¹⁰⁾

Beyond the reticence of Indian politicians to criticize the border guards or to rein in the BSF, the acts and rules of the BSF explicitly encourage senior officers to cover up any misdeeds. If at any point a superior officer determines that the disclosure of a BSF crime threatens India's national security, he or she is able to prevent its disclosure (BSF, 2004, page 75).

Muslims who reside in border areas also have to submit to extra surveillance in the name of security and of the global war on terror (Chatterjee, 2004; Simpson, 2004). One older Muslim leader described occasional visits from security officers in which they asked him to provide detailed information on the numbers of Muslims living in his area, the location and number of mosques, and the size and location of private religious schools. The need to categorize and monitor the activities of Muslims becomes clear, as the 70-year-old Muslim male retired teacher explains:

"Now our government is saying that in the areas near the border with Bangladesh all of the mosques and madrassahs are terrorist training centers. Our state government is saying this. They are also saying the mosques are where weapons are stored. Now you can see our situation. Our country's thinking is against the Muslim community."

The violent actions of the BSF at the border and inside the territory of India demonstrate not only that the borderlands are an exceptional space but that the decision on the exception, on identifying a clear and present danger to the Indian state, has been subsumed by the exclusionary narratives of the global war on terror, which mark all Muslims as a potential terrorist threat. The result is intimidation, harassment, and violence perpetrated against Muslims by state-sanctioned security forces and the increasing marginalization of Muslims in the affairs of the Indian state.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/lsdeb/ls13/ses2/31091299.htm>

6 Conclusion

In this paper I make three claims about locating and understanding the decision on the exception of sovereign power. First, I argue that borderlands constitute an explicitly spatial example of the state of exception, as violence is deployed outside the rule of law and without consequences. Agamben's theorization of sovereign power and the state of exception have generated substantial interest in the aftermath of the establishment of the prison camp at Guantánamo Bay and the declarations of emergency as part of the global war on terror. Scholars have investigated the biopolitics of sovereign power, described the dehumanizing tactics of the state, and identified the spatiality of the state of exception, which occurs in the territory where the sovereign has authority and results in the creation of the camp, a bounded space to hold *homines sacri* taken outside of the law (Butler, 2004; Dicken and Laustsen, 2005; Ek, 2006; Gregory, 2004; Minca, 2006). Collectively, these interventions produce the perception that the state of exception of sovereign power is increasingly all-encompassing, where everyone is already a *homo sacer* and "a zone of indistinction is becoming globalized" (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2004, page 10). Despite this all-encompassing potentiality, in this paper I argue that the practices that constitute the state of exception can be located in a few places. Beyond the space of the camp, borderlands are the most locatable example of the state of exception and are, therefore, a crucial site for understanding the decision to take individuals outside the law (Salter, 2008).

Second, I demonstrate how the exceptional space in the Bengal borderlands was created through enactments of security as the line drawn on a map by a British lawyer in 1947 was increasingly practiced in the borderlands. The need to impose sovereignty in the previously unorganized borderlands resulted in aggressive and violent state intervention. Although modern states represent the linkages between their territory and their sovereign authority as fixed and inviolable, it is more often fragile and must be vigorously reiterated and patrolled. In the Bengal borderlands, despite the ratcheting up of security practices, the fiction of a coterminous nation, state, and territory is exposed on a daily basis as people transgress the border and create alternative networks of connection that do not fit neatly into the border regime of the sovereign state. That act of transgression is perceived as a factual danger to the existence of the state, which must be contained immediately. As a result, the borderland residents of Bangladesh are harassed, abducted, and killed in a way that is quotidian and unremarkable. Their lives are given little value by the authorities and are dealt with accordingly. In that zone, the category of political citizen is shed and the potential for being reduced to bare life is ever present. It is an exceptional space where the 'normal' laws of the state do not apply and where the BSF border guards are given the authority to make the decision to kill people without consequences.

Third, I argue that simply entering the border zone is not enough to trigger the decision on the exception. Transgressions of the border that appear to undermine the authority of the state do result in the decision on the exception, but unevenly. Indian farmers who submit to the authority of the state at the gates pass safely through the border zone. Smugglers who bribe the border guards move through unimpeded. However, as the exclusionary narratives of the global war on terror mark Muslims as a potential threat to the state, Muslim bodies, specifically, trigger the decision. The agents of exception, who enforce law and order by operating outside the law, have reduced Muslims on both sides of the border to the bare life of sovereign power.

Acknowledgements. The findings in this paper are based, in part, on work supported by the US National Science Foundation under Grant number 0602206, the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, and the Political Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers. Thank you to Heather Fransisco for creating the map and to Brent Jones, Robert Kaiser, and Lisa Romano for commenting on earlier drafts. Any errors that remain are mine.

References

- Ackelson J, 2005, "Constructing security on the U.S. – Mexico border" *Political Geography* **24** 165 – 184
- Agamben G, 1998 *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA)
- Agamben G, 2005 *State of Exception* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA)
- Amoore L, 2006, "Biometric borders: governing mobilities in the war on terror" *Political Geography* **25** 336 – 351
- Andreas P, Biersteker T, 2003 *The Rebordering of North America* (Routledge, New York)
- Benjamin W, 1940, "On the concept of history", in *Selected Writings, Volume 4 1938 – 1940* Eds H Eiland, M Jennings (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA) pp 380 – 411
- BSF, 2004 *BSF Acts and Rules* (Border Security Force, Ministry of Law, New Delhi)
- Buerk R, 2006, "Villagers left in limbo by border fence" *BBC online edition*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4653810.stm
- Buncombe A, 2007, "Foreign extremists blamed for attacks in Hyderabad" *The Independent* (UK) 27 August
- Bush G, 2007a, "Notice: continuation of the national emergency with respect to terrorists who disrupt the Middle East peace process", <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070118-4.html>
- Bush G, 2007b, "Notice: continuation of the national emergency with respect to certain terrorist attacks", <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/09/20070912-2.html>
- Butler J, 1990 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, New York)
- Butler J, 1993 *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (Routledge, New York)
- Butler J, 2004 *Precarious Life* (Verso, New York)
- Census of India 2001, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Delhi
- Chatterjee P, 2004 *The Politics of the Governed* (Columbia University Press, New York)
- Chatterji J, 1999, "The fashioning of a frontier: the Radcliffe line and Bengal's border landscape" *Modern Asian Studies* **33**(1) 185 – 242
- Chatterji S, 1947 *The Partition of Bengal: A Geographical Study with Maps and Diagrams* (DR Mitra, Calcutta)
- Connolly, W, 2004, "The complexity of sovereignty", in *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* Eds J Edkins, V Pin-Fat, M Shapiro (Routledge, New York) pp 23 – 40
- Crampton J, Elden S, 2006, "Space, politics, calculation: an introduction" *Social and Cultural Geography* **7** 681 – 685
- Davis M, 2001 *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (Verso, London)
- DeCaroli S, 2007, "Boundary stones: Giorgio Agamben and the field of sovereignty", in *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* Eds M Calarco, S DeCaroli (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA) pp 43 – 69
- Dicken B, Laustsen C, 2005 *The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp* (Routledge, New York)
- Doty R, 2007, "States of exception on the Mexico – U.S. border: security, 'decisions' and civilian border patrols" *International Political Sociology* **1** 113 – 137
- Edkins J, Pin-Fat V, 2004, "Introduction: Life, power, resistance", in *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* Eds J Edkins, V Pin-Fat, M Shapiro (Routledge, New York) pp 1 – 21
- Edkins J, Pin-Fat V, Shapiro M, 2004 *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics* (Routledge, New York)
- Ejaz R, 2008, "Iftehkar urges Mukherjee to keep border peaceful" *The New Age* 1 August
- Ek R, 2006, "Giorgio Agamben and the spatialities of the camp: an introduction" *Geografiska Annaler, Series B* **88** 363 – 386
- Elden S, 2007, "Terror and territory" *Antipode* **39** 821 – 845
- Foucault M, 1978 *A History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction* (Random House, New York)
- Ganguly S, 2002 *Conflict Unending: India and Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (Columbia University Press, New York)

- Gregory D, 2004 *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Blackwell, Malden, MA)
- Gregory D, 2006, "The black flag: Guantánamo Bay and the state of exception" *Geografiska Annaler, Series B* **88** 405–427
- Gregory D, 2007, "Vanishing points", in *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* Eds D Gregory, A Pred (Routledge, New York) pp 205–236
- Gregory D, Pred A, 2007 *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* (Routledge, New York)
- Hazarika S, 1999 *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's North-East and Bangladesh* (Sage, New Delhi)
- Hussain N, 2003 *The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonialism and the Rule of Law* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI)
- Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, 2008, "Annual report", <http://mha.gov.in>
- Jones R, 2009, "Geopolitical boundary narratives, the global war on terror and border fencing in India" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series* **34** 290–304
- Kabir E, 2005 *Border Fencing: A Major Irritant in Indo-Bangla Relations* (News Network, Dhaka)
- Kaiser R, Nikiforova E, 2006, "Borderland spaces of identification and dis/location: multiscale narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place in the Estonian–Russian borderlands" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* **29** 928–958
- Kearns G, 2007, "Bare life, political violence, and the territorial structure of Britain and Ireland", in *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* Eds D Gregory, A Pred (Routledge, New York) pp 7–36
- Klein N, 2007 *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Metropolitan Books, New York)
- Kumar H, 2005, "India arrests suspected leader of Delhi bomb blasts" *The New York Times* 13 November, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/13/international/asia/13cnd-india.html>
- Legg S, 2006, "Governmentality, congestion and calculation in colonial Delhi" *Social and Cultural Geography* **7** 709–729
- Long J, 2006, "Border anxiety in Palestine–Israel" *Antipode* **38** 107–127
- Majumder S, 2005, "India and the death penalty" *BBC News Online* 4 August, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2586611.stm
- Minca C, 2005, "The return of the camp" *Progress in Human Geography* **29** 405–412
- Minca C, 2006, "Giorgio Agamben and the new biopolitical nomos" *Geografiska Annaler, Series B* **88** 387–403
- Minca C, 2007, "Agamben's geographies of modernity" *Political Geography* **26** 78–97
- Mitra S, 2004, "Train from Bangladesh" *The Telegraph* (Calcutta) 14 September
- Murphy A, 1996, "The sovereign state system as political-territorial ideal: historical and contemporary considerations", in *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* Eds T Biersteker, C Weber (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) pp 81–120
- Nag K, 2008, "Illegal Bangla migrants aiding terrorists" *Times of India* 30 July
- Neocleous M, 2006, "The problem with normality: taking exception to 'permanent emergency'" *Alternatives* **31** 191–213
- Neocleous M, 2008 *Critique of Security* (McGill–Queen's University Press, Montreal)
- Nevins J, 2001 *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the 'Illegal Alien' and the Remaking of the U.S. – Mexico Boundary* (Routledge, New York)
- Ó Tuathail G, 2003, "Just out looking for a fight: American affect and the invasion of Iraq" *Antipode* **35** 856–870
- Oza R, 2007a, "Contrapuntal geographies of threat and security: the United States, India, and Israel" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **25** 9–32
- Oza R, 2007b, "The geography of Hindu right-wing violence in India", in *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* Eds D Gregory, A Pred (Routledge, New York) pp 153–173
- Paglen T, 2007, "Groom lake and the imperial production of nowhere", in *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* Eds D Gregory, A Pred (Routledge, New York) pp 237–271
- Pratt G, 2005, "Abandoned women and spaces of exception" *Antipode* **37** 1052–1078
- Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act of 2001, Lok Sabha (Parliament), India
- Rahman M, Van Schendel W, 2003, "'I am not a refugee': rethinking partition migration" *Modern Asian Studies* **37** 551–584
- Rai S, Sengupta S, 2006, "Explosions on trains in India kill scores" *The New York Times* 11 July, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/11/world/asia/11cnd-india.html>
- Rose M, 2002, "Seductions of resistance: power, politics and performative style of systems" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **20** 383–400
- Rumley D, Minghi J (Eds), 1991 *The Geography of Border Landscapes* (Routledge, London)

- Salter M, 2003, "Rights of passage: the passport in international relations" (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO)
- Salter M, 2006, "The global visa regime and the political technologies of the international self: borders, bodies, biopolitics" *Alternatives* **31** 167–189
- Salter M, 2007, "Governmentalities of an airport: heterotopia and confession" *International Political Sociology* **1** 49–66
- Salter M, 2008, "When the exception becomes the rule: borders, sovereignty and citizenship" *Citizenship Studies* **2** 365–380
- Sammadar R, 1999 *The Marginal Nation: Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal* (Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA)
- Schmitt C, 1985 *Political Theory: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA)
- Schmitt C, 1996 *The Concept of the Political* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL)
- Secor A, 2007, "An unrecognizable condition has arrived", in *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror, and Political Violence* Eds D Gregory, A Pred (Routledge, New York) pp 37–54
- Sengupta S, 2008, "Terrorist attacks unsettle India" *The New York Times* 29 July
- Shankar J, 2008, "India arrests 15 suspects in bombings, plans to attack Mumbai" *Bloomberg News* 6 October
- Simpson E, 2004, "'Hindutva' as rural planning paradigm in post-earthquake Gujarat", in *The Politics of Cultural Mobilization in India* Eds J Zavos, A Wyatt, V Hewitt (Oxford University Press, Oxford) pp 136–156
- Singh U, 2006, "The silent erosion: anti-terror laws and shifting contours of jurisprudence in India" *Diogenes* **212** 116–133
- Sparke M, 2006, "A neoliberal nexus: economy, security and the biopolitics of citizenship on the border" *Political Geography* **25** 151–180
- Sullivan T, 2007, "India's border fence encloses Bangladesh" *Associated Press* 1 June
- The Daily Star*
- 2005, "High level BDR–BSF border fence at Shiliguri Sept 6–9", 3 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2005/09/03/d50903070280.htm>
- 2006a, "BSF guns down 2 in Thakurgoan", 8 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/08/d60908013622.htm>
- 2006b, "Zakiganj border tense again", 12 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/12/d60912070198.htm>
- 2006c, "BSF kills 2", 14 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/14/d60914012416.htm>
- 2006d, "BSF kills 1", 22 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/22/d60922012015.htm>
- 2006e, "BSF kills 1", 23 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/23/d60923012113.htm>
- 2006f, "One injured in BSF firing", 24 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/24/d60924063292.htm>
- 2006g, "BSF kills 1", 25 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/25/d60925013824.htm>
- 2006h, "BSF yet to return three abducted from border", 26 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/26/d60926070492.htm>
- 2006i, "BSF kills youth in Satkhira", 30 September, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/09/30/d60930011914.htm>
- The Independent* (Bangladesh), 2006, "BSF, Indian miscreants kill 461 Bangladeshis in 6 years, Odhikar", 8 January
- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment of 2004, Lok Sabha (Parliament), India
- USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 §115 Congress Statute 272
- Van Schendel W, 2005 *The Bengal Borderlands: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia* (Anthem Press, London)
- Vaughan-Williams N, 2007, "The shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes: new border politics?" *Alternatives* **32** 177–195
- WARC, 2007 *World Press Trends Bangladesh* (World Association of Newspapers, Henley on Thames, Bucks)

Conditions of use. This article may be downloaded from the E&P website for personal research by members of subscribing organisations. This PDF may not be placed on any website (or other online distribution system) without permission of the publisher.