

Sheryl Lightfoot and Elsa Stamatopoulou (eds.), *Indigenous Peoples and Borders*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2024. 384 pages. ISBN 978-1-4780-2547-4. \$30.95 USD paperback.

Through the imposition of borders nation states attempt to inscribe their sovereignty over territory. However, by their very existence Indigenous people confront and disrupt these declarations of sovereignty which are often based on ideas like *terra nullius* and “civilization.” Consequently, Indigenous people often find themselves in the cross-hairs of border politics and techniques. The result is frequently displacement, a denial of original presence, and disruption of traditional ways of life—which might include migration. In this respect, the territorial integrity of nation state, a concept at the heart of modern international political theory, sits awkwardly with historical and cultural existence of Indigenous people’s inhabitation of territory. As a result, Indigenous people’s sense of territoriality and borders is rarely acknowledged and even more rarely understood.

This book, *Indigenous Peoples and Borders*, examines how borders are tied to the legacy of colonialism and settler colonialism. Post-colonial critique has long pointed out that borders are part of claiming land often at the expense of Indigenous people’s way of life and even identity. Expanding upon this concept, as multiple essays in this collection point out, to recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples means confronting normative ideas of territorial integrity. Furthermore, in recent years the resistance and activism of Indigenous peoples is transforming how borders work and are understood. Consequently this book represents an effort to explore how borders impact Indigenous People and how Indigenous People are impacting borders.

The collection draws together scholars from a range of disciplines, including law, international relations, political science, sociology, and others, as well as activists engaged in supporting Indigenous peoples as they resist and continue their ways of life in the context of constrictive colonial territoriality. It emerged from a conference held at Columbia university in 2019. The introduction written by Tone Bleie, Sheryl Lightfoot, and Elsa Stamatopoulou offers a compelling and informative overview of how the international community is increasingly interested in how borders impact to Indigenous peoples. They make a case for international relations to pay more attention to Indigenous issues. The authors show that the international legal system and human rights in particular forms the background for the later chapters and current discussions. As the description of the UN expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (18-21) explains “movement has been a way of life since time immemorial” and that this movement often transcends the settled nation state. This sets the stage for an argument that there is a robust body of international law, norms and case law in which the rights of Indigenous Peoples is challenging state attempts to normalize the dispossession of Indigenous People from their lands.

The book is divided into four parts. The first aims at “re-thinking” borders and power; the second, titled “borders as obstructions,” presents the limits of the Westphalian state system with respect to Indigenous ways of life; the third examines how globalization and economic integration have negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples; the fourth explores self-determination across borders and how resistance to the normalization of borders is part of self-determination.

Sovereignty, obstruction of self-determination, globalization and environmental concerns are examined in chapters that range from militarily imposed borders in Bangladesh, to resource extraction in the Russian Arctic and the Columbia-Ecuador border, to the sale of toxic pesticides from the US to Mexico. It is ambitious. There is not room in this review to discuss each chapter, but some essays are stronger than others. The book would have benefited from coordinating between the authors to explore the key issues at the heart of the book. The impressive geographic range will be immediately observed by the reader. For instance, the first section contains chapters

that range from the borderlands of India, Nepal and Bangladesh, to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA (CANZUS), to Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI). Tone Bleie's article considers the implications of a cosmopolitan approach to Indigenous existence in a borderlands context through a study of "witchcraft". David B. Macdonald examines legal relationships and what he calls the "settler lines" to offer a critique of "friendship" between the CANZUS settler states. While Bleie and Macdonald provoke rethinking state normalization of territoriality and rejection of challenges to their sovereignty, Patel's critique of technological determinism, "neo-liberalism," and data sovereignty obscures the otherwise interesting case study of the KRI's efforts to engage in self-determination through access to the internet.

Violence has an understandable place in this collection. Binalakshim Nepram's article provides much detail. More might have been done to expand on this issue with comparisons to the chapters on South America. It is surprising that a more fulsome discussion of violence either by settler states or Indigenous Peoples is not developed in this volume as it is often associated with border control.

As stated above, there was opportunity to integrate and collectively reflect on the implications of border for a range of issues. Consider, for instance the theme of environmentalism. Disappointingly, Jacqueline Gillis's article on the environmental crisis, does not deal with the border. More effectively, Andrea Carmen's study of cross-border pesticide use highlights how borders make Indigenous people more vulnerable. The effect of pesticide use on children's development is striking, and more could have been done to bring the two articles into conversation. For another example, Elifuraha Laltaika discusses neoliberalism stalking the East Africa Community economic integration. More could have been done to consider these points with respect to Patel's essay, on the KRI.

Broadly, the collection would have benefited from engagement with other studies that inform the topic of Indigenous Peoples and borders. Many of the contributions lack good historical context. Hana Shams Ahmed's study of the Chittagong Hills Massacre by Bengali Settlers in 2010 is good, but it is the exception. Many of the case studies here have generated previous scholarship which ought to have been referenced as it would have helped readers to situate this book and its novelty. For instance, the study of the Haudenosaunee lacrosse players' passports is well-known, and readers would benefit from an explanation as to how Sheryl Lightfoot's article offers new insight.

The chapters on South America stand out for their quality. In particular, the discussion by Yifat Susskind of Indigenous women's activism through MADRE and their critique of refugee policies, and the study of constitutionalism by Erika Yamada and Manoel B. Do Prado Junior raise important questions about how borders are powerful tools of state governance. These essays which draw from specific situations illustrate how, in the context of increasing securitization, border policing and narrowing legal options, the UNDRIP offers an important umbrella for Indigenous People to confront state defined borders.

This book has much to offer for interested readers. But it must be said, like the content, the quality of writing in this collection is mixed. This critique may be explained by the overly theoretical nature of some of the essays, but from a lack of clarity in phrasing conceptual issues emerge. Strong editing and control over the themes would make this book a more useful tool in both the classroom and for future reference for policy-makers and scholars. The book nevertheless offers an important intervention that may inflect future conversations.

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