

# Borderlines

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NEWSLETTER AND  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Borderlines is the newsletter of the International Boundaries Research Unit at Durham University. It has a readership of more than 3,000 boundary scholars, practitioners and enthusiasts around the world. In addition to highlighting the activities of the Unit, we are keen to include information on boundary-related events, publications and research at other institutions. Please send information relating to relevant activities to Astrid Alvarez at the address below.



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### Editorial:

## Getting our feet wet: the challenge of river boundaries

**If you were asked what percentage of the total length of international land boundaries followed rivers, what would you say? 5%? Perhaps 10%? Prepare to be surprised. Research undertaken by IBRU over the last year suggests that the figure is closer to 30% – a remarkable 71,000 km out of a total boundary length of nearly 255,000 km. No fewer than three quarters of the world's 318 land boundaries follow rivers for at least part of their course, and more than 10% follow rivers for more than 500 km.**

Why have rivers been such popular choices as boundaries? In Europe they were often chosen for their defensive value. During the era of European imperial boundary-making in Africa, Asia and Latin America rivers became boundaries almost by default, as they were sometimes the only physical features marked on the explorers' maps that were used by the diplomats who carved up those continents. Even where the landscape was reasonably well mapped, rivers appealed as boundaries to cash-strapped colonial governments because they appeared to require little or no demarcation.

Whatever the original rationale for choosing a river as a boundary, most governments today agree that river boundaries present complex challenges in terms of both boundary definition and management. Few rivers are the well-defined and stable features they appear to be on maps: many meander crazily and change course on a regular basis; some flood over wide areas; others dry up

altogether for years on end; islands appear and disappear; and the 'main channel' can change from season to season. Disputes over the alignment of river boundaries are therefore common, and often very difficult to resolve. Even when there is no disagreement over boundary alignment, establishing equitable and efficient regimes for navigation, irrigation, fishing, energy generation and other uses of river resources is rarely straightforward. There are currently three disputes over the use of boundary rivers before the International Court of Justice (Hungary/Slovakia, Costa Rica v. Nicaragua and Argentina v. Uruguay) and more will surely follow as population growth places ever-greater demands on dwindling natural resources.

River boundaries are now a major focus of IBRU's research activities. A database containing information on more than 1,200 river boundary sections around the world will be published on the Unit's website later in 2008, along with an article in the journal *Water Policy*. In July we will also be repeating the successful training workshop first run in September 2005 on the theme 'River Boundaries: Practicalities & Solutions' (see page 3 for further details). Our long-term aim is to develop a toolkit to assist in the delimitation, demarcation and management of river boundaries, and we would encourage readers with practical experience of these activities to contribute to this project.

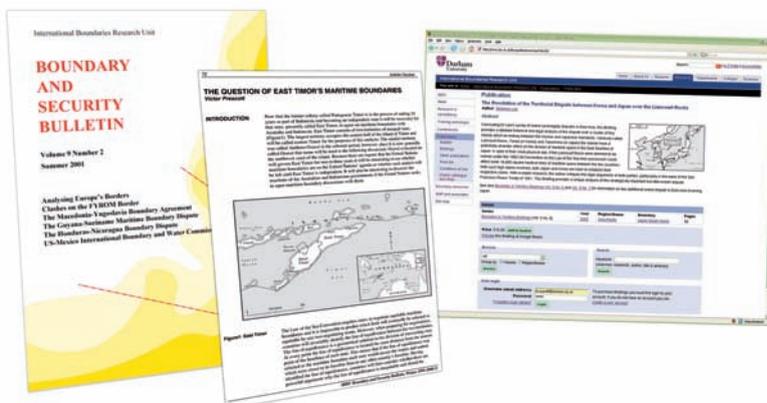


Satellite imagery reveals the complex geomorphology of the Komadugu Yobe river which forms part of the boundary between Nigeria and Niger (Landsat ETM+ image, 2000. Source: Global Land Cover Facility).

# NEW! FREE ACCESS TO BOUNDARY & SECURITY BULLETIN ARCHIVE

Nearly 200 articles from IBRU's **Boundary & Security Bulletin** are now available as free downloads from the IBRU website. The **Bulletin** was published quarterly from 1993 to 2001 and included articles by leading boundary scholars and practitioners on a wide range of legal, technical and geopolitical issues.

The price of titles in the **Boundary & Territory Briefings** and **Maritime Briefings** series has also been reduced to £15 per Briefing; these can be purchased and downloaded from the IBRU website or



ordered from IBRU in hard copy or on CD-ROM. Extracts from all Briefings can also be viewed online via Google Books.

Full details of all Briefings and Bulletin articles and are available in our searchable online catalogue at [www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/publications](http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/publications).

We have also improved access to IBRU's list of links to boundary-related websites, including a keyword search tool. This can be found at [www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/resources/links](http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/resources/links). If you know of relevant websites that you think should be added to the list, please let us know.

## Recent and forthcoming publications by IBRU staff and associates

Louisa Bialasiewicz, David Campbell, Stuart Elden, Steve Graham & Alison Williams (2007) **'Performing security: the imaginative geographies of current US strategy'**, *Political Geography* 26(4)

John Donaldson (2008) **'Where rivers and boundaries meet: building the International River Boundaries Database'**, *Water Policy*

John Donaldson (2008) **'Pillars and perspective: demarcation of the Belgian Congo-Northern Rhodesia boundary'**, *Journal of Historical Geography* (part of a special section on historical boundary commissions comprising five papers first presented at IBRU's 2006 conference *Border Management in an Insecure World*)

Stuart Elden (2007) **'Terror and Territory'**, *Antipode* 39(5)

Martin Pratt and Derek Smith (2007) **How to Deal with Maritime Boundary Uncertainty in Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Areas**, *Association of International Petroleum Negotiators Research Papers*

## Staff news



David Campbell

In August 2007 **Michelle Speak** left IBRU after twelve years' service as Director of External Relations. Michelle has made an extraordinary contribution to IBRU's development and success, coordinating four major international conferences in Durham and no fewer than 32 professional training workshops which have attracted more than 1,200 participants from over 100 countries. **Dr Alison Williams**, one of IBRU's Research Associates, also moved on in 2007 to take up a lectureship in the Geography Department at the University of Liverpool. Alison continues to research and write on boundary and territorial issues.



Diana Martin

**Professor David Campbell** has taken over as IBRU's Academic Director from **Professor Stuart Elden**, who has been awarded a Major Research Fellowship by the Leverhulme Trust to prepare a history of the concept of territory. **Diana Martin** has joined the IBRU team as a Doctoral Research Fellow co-sponsored by IBRU and Durham's Department of Geography. Diana is studying the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, including their legal status and evolution of the camps in which they live.



Astrid Alvarez

We also welcome **Astrid Alvarez** as the Unit's new External Relations and Business Development Manager. With a background in marketing and communications, Astrid will be responsible for managing and developing IBRU's conferences, training programmes and other international activities.

## Keep in touch with other boundary enthusiasts: Join the int-boundaries e-mail list

*Int-boundaries* is an e-mail forum established by IBRU for the exchange of information, ideas and opinions between people who are interested in the delimitation, demarcation and management of international boundaries. Subscription is free and there are no restrictions on who may join. The list's archives and details of how to sign up are available at [www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/int-boundaries.html](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/int-boundaries.html)

# 2008 training workshop programme

IBRU workshops aim to provide a relevant combination of background theory and practical application. Course numbers are limited to create an informal teaching environment and maximise interaction between tutors and participants. Bookings are now being accepted for the following workshops:

## Negotiating International Boundaries

**7-9 April 2008**

**Venue:** Durham University

**Price:** £1,395\*  
including accommodation  
and all meals

Few things, if any, are more important to a state than its territory and sovereign rights. It is therefore vital for anyone involved in the negotiation of the boundaries of the state to be as well prepared as possible. This workshop, led by some of the world's most experienced boundary negotiators, is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to conclude a successful boundary agreement.

The course will include practical instruction on building and preparing a negotiating team, negotiation strategy and tactics, and drafting an agreement. Day two of the workshop will take the form of a boundary negotiation



exercise in which participants will work in teams to resolve a boundary dispute based on a real-world scenario.

Full details of the workshop programme can be found in the flyer accompanying this newsletter and at [www.dur.ac.uk/workshops/2008/negotiation](http://www.dur.ac.uk/workshops/2008/negotiation).

## River Boundaries: Practicalities & Solutions

**7-9 July 2008**

**Venue:** Durham University

**Price:** £1,395\*  
including accommodation  
and all meals

Three quarters of the world's international boundaries follow rivers for at least part of their course. While the reasons for choosing rivers as boundaries are easily understood, river boundaries almost invariably generate a multitude of legal, technical and managerial challenges – for which no instruction book has yet been written. This unique course is designed to help boundary-makers and managers develop effective strategies for turning river boundaries into assets rather than a source of friction between the riparian states.

Led by expert tutors with practical experience of resolving problems associated with river boundaries, the workshop will cover issues such as: defining and



demarcating river boundaries; identifying key river features such as the thalweg, the 'main channel' and the 'banks'; islands in boundary rivers; monitoring and accommodating physical changes in river boundaries; managing access and resource use in shared rivers; and resolving disputes over river boundaries.

## Strategies & Tools for Effective Border Management

**15-17  
September  
2008**

**Venue:** Durham University

**Price:** £1,395\*  
including accommodation  
and all meals

Managing borders in the 21st century is a complex and challenging task. It is widely agreed that in a globalising world borders should be as open as possible; yet in the post-9/11 world governments are understandably more anxious than ever to ensure that their frontiers are secured against external threats. This innovative workshop is designed to help policymakers and practitioners develop border management strategies which strike the best possible balance between these apparently conflicting goals.

Led by expert tutors, the workshop will provide practical instruction on a range of topics which are often overlooked elsewhere, including: managing border crossings; monitoring and controlling



Andrew Testa/Panos Pictures

borders between crossing points; managing maritime borders; and facilitating inter-agency cooperation. While the appropriate use of technological solutions will be explored, the workshop is not intended simply to showcase the latest technology. Rather, participants will be encouraged to adopt an integrated approach to border management which maximises the effectiveness of available resources.

**To book a place, please contact Astrid Alvarez Email: [ibru-events@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ibru-events@durham.ac.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0)191 334 1965 or book online at [www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/workshops](http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/workshops)**

\* Workshop fees for UK-based participants are normally subject to VAT at 17.5%

IBRU's 20th anniversary conference will address a topic of growing concern to governments, scholars and boundary practitioners.

The International Boundaries Research Unit began work in 1989, the year that saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the first use of the term 'the borderless world'. Two decades on, borders are still very much with us but the geopolitical setting in which they exist has changed dramatically. Governments around the world are facing increasingly complex challenges in the exercise of territorial sovereignty – and a growing number are arguably losing the battle, sometimes with catastrophic consequences.

The changing nature of sovereignty in a globalising world has attracted attention from a wide range of disciplines, but the practical implications of such changes for boundary-making, management and dispute resolution have rarely been examined in depth. This major international conference will provide scholars and practitioners with an opportunity to reflect on the impact of the geopolitical upheavals of the last twenty years, and to exchange ideas about the meaning and function of territorial sovereignty today and in the decades ahead. We hope you will be able to join us.

A formal call for papers will be issued later in the year. However, proposals for panels/papers are welcome at any time. Themes of particular interest include:

- Sovereignty and territorial integrity
- 'Earned sovereignty', 'contingent sovereignty' and their territorial implications
- 'Failed' states; ungoverned, undergoverned and 'ungovernable' regions
- Sovereignty and international law
- New frontiers: de-bordering, re-bordering and 'networked borders'
- Secessionist movements and new states
- Alternatives to absolute territorial sovereignty
- Boundary-making and the assertion of sovereignty on the ground
- Sovereignty and surveillance
- Creeping jurisdiction? The exercise of control over maritime space
- New approaches to the resolution of territorial disputes



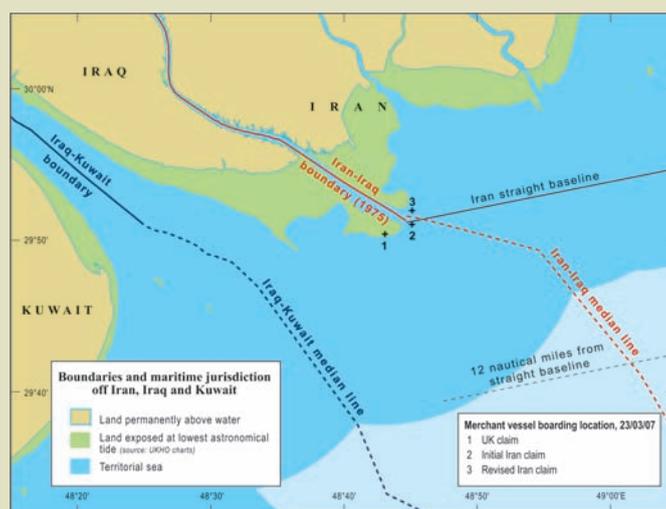
Sign on the Estonia-Russia boundary (Yann Mingard/Strates/Panos Pictures)

- The impact of climate change on sovereignty
- The management of transboundary resources
- Sovereignty and Antarctica

Additional information will be made available on the conference website at [www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/conferences/sos](http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/conferences/sos)

## Boundary developments in 2007: a selection from the IBRU news archive

- Four maritime boundary agreements were signed in 2007 – between Cyprus and Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Norway and Russia, and Russia and Ukraine – while the Guyana-Suriname and Honduras-Nicaragua maritime boundaries were delimited through third-party adjudication.
- The maritime boundary between Iran and Iraq became a subject of international scrutiny in March when fifteen British sailors and marines were captured by Iranian forces in disputed waters at the mouth of the Shatt al Arab waterway. A dispute between Chile and Peru over their maritime boundary also escalated in 2007, with the Peruvian president threatening to take the issue to the International Court of Justice.
- The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission dissolved itself on 30 November after the governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia failed to agree on a process for demarcating their common boundary. The Commission ruled that the boundary it proposed in November 2006 (which was depicted on large-scale maps with precise coordinates specified for pillar locations) is now legally binding on the two countries.
- Better progress was made in the demarcation and maintenance of other land boundaries, including Cambodia-Laos, Cambodia-Vietnam, Cameroon-Nigeria, Italy-Slovenia, Moldova-Ukraine and Russia-Ukraine. Syria also agreed to restart demarcation efforts with Lebanon.
- Benin and Niger held ceremonies confirming their respective sovereignty over nine and seventeen islands in the River Niger in



Claimed locations of the arrest of UK naval personnel at the mouth of the Shatt al Arab waterway in March 2007

accordance with the 2005 Judgment of the International Court of Justice. Meanwhile, the transfer of the Bakassi Peninsula from Nigeria to Cameroon (as required by a 2002 ICJ Judgment) continues to be a source of contention in Nigeria, with the senate ruling in December that the national constitution would have to be changed before the peninsula could be handed over.