Border disputes and micro-conflicts in South and Southeast Asia

William Avis
University of Birmingham
10 November 2020

Question

What are the trends and developments relating to border disputes and micro-conflicts in South and South-East Asia?

Contents

1. Summary

This rapid literature review presents the key literature on border disputes and micro-conflicts in South and Southeast Asia. The focus is on recent ideas that are prevalent in literature from post-2010. The literature review draws on both academic and grey literature.

The report finds that conflicts have become more complex and protracted often linked to global challenges from climate change to human trafficking. Such challenges often intersect with complex socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions that operate through power networks which transcend conventional conceptual boundaries, e.g. public vs. private or local vs. national.

Border regions are often identified as locations in which latent conflict is located, driven by a range of intersecting factors including (though not limited to), the unresolved tensions of colonialism, unclear or contested border demarcations, the historically porous nature of border regions, contestation over natural resources and the "less-" or "un"-governed nature of many such areas. Subnational conflicts with strong trans-border dimensions are the most widespread and enduring forms of conflict in South and Southeast Asia, affecting half the countries of the region.

Territorial disputes in Asia remain a challenge to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region. Of all interstate disputes, those over territory tend to be more likely to lead to armed conflict. A mix of political and economic interests, normative reasons, and competition over scarce natural resources have been identified as drivers of conflict over disputed territories. Such disputes vary greatly in terms of their origins, the scope of the territory in question and the role these disputes play in the bilateral or multilateral relations of the states involved. There are numerous ways territorial disputes can be categorised. Brunet-Jailly (2015) present three categories of border disputes: territorial, positional and functional. According to this typology:

- Territorial disputes are about land. They are the most complex ones as they undermine the integrity of states.
- Positional disputes arise when the parties agree in principle on a border but cannot agree on the position of the boundary line.
- Functional disputes are neither about territory nor the borderline but about competing understandings of the function that a certain border should perform.

Contestation over natural resources has often been included in such typologies.

Regional conflict systems are often characterised by their complexity; involving numerous actors, causes, structural conditions and dynamics. Such complexity poses difficulties to those looking to undertake analysis of the regional dynamics of violence. It is also unclear how violence diffuses in regions and under which conditions a regional conflict system can emerge. It is also unclear who the key actors are in any given border dispute, how they engage with one another and the extent to which they influence the nature and extent of conflict.

The list of disputes presented in this report should be considered illustrative rather than exhaustive, selected to provide an insight into the multifaceted drivers of dispute and conflict. They are selected to highlight how relatively localised disputes can become global in scope as they intersect with contestations over political or economic power, are inflamed by political actors keen to exploit local grievances or exacerbated by resource scarcity. Many of the disputes

examined can be traced to the process of decolonisation and the various regional and domestic struggles that ensued. Despite the regional and global transformations that followed, these disputes continue to play an important role in relations between countries. Indeed historical contestations continue to be inscribed with new meaning as circumstances evolve.

Thailand / Cambodia Dispute(s): While the dispute between Thailand and Cambodia does have its roots in the colonial period of the region, the most important factor that led to the escalation of the dispute in 2008 and the subsequent clashes was domestic politics in Thailand.

India / Pakistan Dispute(s) - Jammu and Kashmir: The origins of this dispute can be traced to the legacy of the British colonial rule in India and the nature of the British departure from the Indian subcontinent in 1947–8. Tensions in the Indo-Pak border can also be exacerbated be competition over resources, for example, tensions between India and Pakistan have risen from over the Baglihar dam construction over River Chenab in Indian-administered Kashmir.

India / China Dispute(s): Contemporary India / Chinese relationship are largely cordial and a key factors in regional stability. After the 1987 incident, relations between the two Asian giants transformed into a cold peace and while both sides officially maintain their territorial claims, whilst accepting the status quo.

Nepal / India Dispute: Despite predominantly cordial relations there are times when border issues have taken a critical turn. One such recent border-related problem between India and Nepal was witnessed during the Madheshi movement. In 2015, an agitating section of the Madheshi community in Nepal blocked the India–Nepal border. Due to the sociocultural proximity of Madheshi community with India, the blockade of the Indo-Nepal border has had repercussions for bilateral ties.

Bangladesh / India Dispute(s): The India–Bangladesh border is the fifth largest land border in the world measuring circa 4096.7 km. The India–Bangladesh border is viewed as a 'security concern' by New Delhi, and has sought to securitise the border with Bangladesh viewing with concern the porous nature of the border making it accessible to the militant groups and smugglers

Bangladesh / Myanmar Dispute(s): The influence of geopolitics is evident in border disputes between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Myanmar occupies a strategic location bordering China and India, and connected with the Indian Ocean through the Bay of Bengal. Criminality has also emerged as a significant issue in the region with Myanmar emerging as a significant hub for the production and distribution of methamphetamine and its derivatives.

South China Sea Maritime Disputes: The territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea are considered some of the most complex conflicts in the region if not worldwide (Bukh, 2020). The disputed areas are abundant in natural resources such as gas and oil and also carry strategic importance, as roughly half of the world's commercial shipping passes through them. These disputes play an important role not only in the relations among the claimants but also the foreign policies of countries such as Japan and the United States. The disputes involve overlapping maritime, territorial and fishing rights and claims by China, Taiwan, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.

2. Border Disputes and Micro-Conflicts

Contemporary conflicts have become more complex and protracted. About 2 billion people, circa a third of the world's population, currently live in countries affected by conflict. Conflict is often linked to global challenges from climate change to human trafficking. According to the Social Science Research Council (2018: 3), "conflicts and widespread violence have complex socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions that operate through power networks which transcend conventional conceptual boundaries, e.g. public vs. private or local vs. national.

It is a commonly held view (Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 2018; Szayna et al., 2017; Krause, 2016) that the nature, intensity, and frequency of conflict have evolved in recent years, shifting from wars fought directly between states to various forms of violence, including insurgencies, guerrilla wars, terrorism, organised and large-scale criminal violence, and protests. This broadly positive trend in the "successful" reduction of conflict at national levels often masks sub-national and cross border pockets of latent, simmering or protracted conflict (Mancini, 2018; Weigand, 2020; Goodhand, 2018).

Border regions are often identified as locations in which latent conflict is located, driven by a range of intersecting factors including (though not limited to), the unresolved tensions of colonialism, unclear or contested border demarcations, the historically porous nature of border regions, contestation over natural resources and the "less-" or "un-"governed nature of many such areas. Goodhand (2018: 3) comments that subnational conflicts with strong trans-border dimensions are the most widespread and enduring forms of conflict in South and Southeast Asia, affecting half the countries of the region. He continues that:

- Border and frontier regions are frequently central to the dynamics of conflict, state building and development.
- Policy makers tend to view border regions as marginal, partly because of state-centric analytic frameworks and ways of working, and partly because of the failure to translate a 'borderland perspective' into operationalisable policies.
- Taking border regions seriously would challenge mainstream approaches and necessitate significant changes to development and peacebuilding policy/practice.

Territorial disputes in Asia remain a serious challenge to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region. Of all interstate disputes, those over territory tend to be more likely to lead to armed conflict. A mix of political and economic interests, normative reasons, and competition over scarce natural resources have been identified as drivers of conflict over disputed territories (Mancini, 2013: 1).

Terminology

Numerous terms and phrases are deployed in the exploration of areas on the margins of nation state and to examine and explain the nature of conflict in these areas. Terms commonly used include borders, boundaries, borderlands and frontiers. There is no agreed use of these terms and they are often used interchangeably.

Borders and the lands they encompass are typically understood as zones straddling an international border. Borders are commonly considered to concern how rulers and governments

control people's freedom of movement (Laine, 2016). Borders are lines of demarcation between two states, legally notifying the territorial limits.

Drawing boundaries between countries is politically sensitive, especially when governments or groups of people have a particular stake in a geographic area. Historically, the practice of drawing borders ignored ethnic, religious, social, or linguistic identities. Further to this, inappropriate boundary descriptions are at the root of many disputes (Goodhand, 2018; Laine, 2016; O'Dowd, 2012). Common issues accompanying the inappropriate use of boundary descriptions include:

- inappropriate topographical terms, such as crest, range, and mouth. These are all vague terms and indicate locations that at times vary due to geological or hydrological changes;
- vague geographical features;
- intricate human and cultural features (Indonesia, for example, includes over 300 ethnic groups, with different languages and cultures. The country has experienced many territorial disputes, both within its populace and with neighbouring countries);
- inconsistent or contradictory statements. Article 56 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), for example, outlines parameters for the establishment of a country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extend 200 nautical miles from the country's coastline. This has created the possibility of overlapping claims in semi-enclosed seas. This ambiguity complicates defining the numerous claims in the East and South China Seas, which is today one of the main sources of tensions hampering peaceful relations in East and Southeast Asia.

Frontiers are vaguer and more ambiguous political spaces, marking zones of transition between different centres of power and regulation (Goodhand, 2018). Frontiers can be seen as ideological projects, spaces where state power is territorialised and contested with specific characteristics of violence and disorder. It is frequently assumed that frontiers are transformed during state building processes into international borders (O'Dowd, 2012: 159). Conflict in South and South-East Asia provide an exemplar of the tensions that can be unleashed as historically porous frontiers are converted into borders via legal definition and the deployment of infrastructure.

Finally, it is also important to note that there is no single, agreed-upon definition of what constitutes violent conflict or how this may manifest in disputed border regions. The term violent conflict may refer to civil war, ethnic war, and interstate war at high and low intensities as well as violence that falls short of war, such as militarised disputes, terrorism, and riots or strikes (Szayna et al., 2017). It is also important to note that trends and drivers of conflict will intersect in complex ways, particularly in areas where governance arrangements may be weak or uncertain (Kett, & Rowson, 2007). Indeed, whilst the terms imply the dynamic nature of the factors and processes that contribute to violent conflict, there is a great deal of debate about reducing conflict to one cause.

As such, there is no generally accepted definition of regions, frontiers or regional border conflicts with commentators articulating a definition based on their own perspectives and areas of exploration. Two characteristics that are common across most studies are:

- geographical proximity of the involved collective actors and
- a certain amount of interaction – be they cooperative or confrontational.

According to this minimal definition of, a regional border conflict is a confrontational interaction between two or more collective actors within a particular geographical space (Ansorg, 2011).

Typology of Conflict

Territorial disputes are disagreement over tracts of land or water that are claimed by two or more independent countries. In such disputes, it is common that neighbouring states support or tolerate rebel groups on their territory. Several approaches in international relations and peace and conflict studies deal with regions and regional conflicts. Especially when it comes to explaining security and violence or interdependence between collective actors, the regional dimension serves as an analytical framework (Ansorg, 2011). Nevertheless, particular processes and phenomena have so far been inadequately theoretically described. Especially when it comes to the regional dynamics of militant violence, conventional theories neglect actions that take place outside the national or international level (Ansorg, 2011).

Territorial disputes in Asia vary greatly in terms of their origins, the scope of the territory in question and the role these disputes play in the bilateral or multilateral relations of the states involved (Bukh, 2020). There are numerous ways territorial disputes can be categorised. Brunet-Jailly (2015) present three categories of border disputes: territorial, positional and functional. According to this typology, territorial disputes are about land. They are the most complex ones as they undermine the integrity of states. Positional disputes arise when the parties agree in principle on a border but cannot agree on the position of the boundary line. Functional disputes are neither about territory nor the borderline but about competing understandings of the function that a certain border should perform. Bukh (2020) asserts that contestation over natural resources should be include in any typology of border dispute.

Table 1: Types of Border Disputes

Type	Description	Causes
Territorial Disputes	Conflicts between states or regions over the ownership of a given area.	A country's desire to increase its power.
		A political need to divert attention from existing problems.
		Claimed "rights" to an area based on history, ethnicity, or geography.
Positional Disputes	Conflicts over the interpretation of documents defining a boundary or the way it is shown on the ground.	Boundary was drawn at a time when accuracy was not important. E.g. River boundaries (banks, navigable channel, centre, etc.)
		Some groups not represented when boundary was created.

		E.g. Colonial boundaries
		Population increases or discovery of resources make accurate boundary important.
Functional Disputes	Conflicts over the national policies applied at a border.	Immigration or customs regulations. E.g. Need for visas or papers to cross borders
		Land use and location policies between neighbours. E.g. Locating landfills, or polluting industries near border
Resource Disputes	Conflicts over the use of resources created or complicated by a boundary.	Resource straddles a border. E.g. River Basin, oil fields

Source: Author's own, data taken from Bukh, 2020: 340; Brunet-Jailly,2015

Alternatively, disputes can be categorised by focusing on the factors that cause states to cooperate or to escalate territorial disputes (Fravel, 2008). One can also explore the role of power and levels of technology of the rival claimants, geopolitics (Emmers, 2009) and the role of non-state actors (Bukh, 2020) in understanding the diverging dynamics of such disputes (Bukh, 2020).

Parker (2006: 79) asserts that borders are the dividing lines between states, and boundaries are the 'unspecific divides or separator that indicates limits of various kinds'. Boundaries can also thus be perceived as psychological, and operating in support of the idea of border. The role of mental barriers and its implications for the border are evident in the case of India and Pakistan and of particular salience in the escalation of conflicts when a sense of national 'pride' may be linked to a border dispute (Tripathi & Chaturvedi, 2019).

When it comes to the origins of territorial disputes in Asia, historical claims of ownership are commonly referenced by parties in conflict (Bukh, 2020). However, rather than a history per se, factors such as colonialism and its legacies, the Cold War and domestic politics of one or more of the parties involved, are considered of importance in understanding conflicts origins and how they are inscribed by new meaning. Specific context matters to the evolution of boundary and territorial disputes with each case of territorial dispute having unique characteristics.

Conflicts have become more complex and protracted, involving more non-state groups and regional and international actors (World Bank & United Nations, 2018). They are increasingly linked to global challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, cyber security and transnational organised crime (HM Government, 2015). The United Kingdom Government (HM Government, 2015) identified the following factors as likely to exert an influence on the nature and extent of violent conflict:

- The increasing threat posed by terrorism, extremism and instability.

- The resurgence of state-based threats; and intensifying wider state competition.
- The impact of technology, especially cyber threats; and wider technological developments.
- The erosion of the rules-based international order, making it harder to build consensus and tackle global threats.

Actors

Regional conflict systems are often characterised by their complexity; involving numerous actors, causes, structural conditions and dynamics. Such complexity poses difficulties to those looking to undertake analysis of the regional dynamics of violence. It is still quite unclear how violence diffuses in regions and under which conditions a regional conflict system can emerge (Ansorg, 2011). It can also be unclear who the key actors are in any given border dispute, how they engage with one another and the extent to which they influence the nature and extent of conflict.

Border disputes are thus not simply waged between the armies of sovereign nation states, but expand to a multiplicity of transnational actors of violence and security that correlate in complex relations and often compete for political control and the monopoly of violence in a region. The regional conflict system that emerges can be thus be defined as a geographically determined area of insecurity, characterised by interdependent violent conflicts with a plurality of different sub-state, national or transnational actors (Ansorg, 2011).

State Actors: Relations between nations are influenced by the actions of government. Cross-border cooperation can mitigate conflict with parties benefiting from the dividends of co-operation, financially, politically and socially. Correspondingly when countries adopt an antagonistic position in relation to border disputes, the threat of conflict and the breakdown of co-operation become evident. It is clear that representatives of state authority including political parties and the military can exacerbate tensions through provocative actions i.e. the occupation of contested areas (see case study on Cambodia – Vietnam), the acquiescence of insurgent group activities (see claims by India and the reported operation of United Liberation Front of Assam from bases in Bangladesh) or the deployment of inflammatory language regarding regional tensions (the perceived support of the Indian government to the cross border Madheshi community).

Non-State Actors: State actors might still be existent in these areas, but they are part of a larger conflict structure together with private, local and transnational actors of violence that take over the production of (in-) security in regions where the scope of public authority is limited. These private entrepreneurs of violence both exploit the population and demand money for protecting the people and their areas (Ansorg, 2011). Non-state actors may include cross border militant movements such as the United Liberation Front of Assam who have reportedly operated across the Indo-Bangladesh Border. This may problematise relations between nations when one party is viewed as allowing militants to operate with impunity.

Ethno-linguistic and Religious Groups: Questions of identity should not be underestimated in the context of border disputes. The trans-border kinship of identity groups can lead to a regional spill over of violence, e.g. the Balkans during the 1990s (Fearon 1998). Moreover, refugee flows and the economic and political weakness of a conflict area, as after the genocide in Rwanda and the war in Burundi in the 1990s, can cause tensions in a wider region (Prunier 2009). In South

and Southeast Asia ethno-linguistic and religious conflict has spilled over borders. This includes Myanmar (Muslim vs Buddhist – targeted attacks on Rohingya groups); North East India (Bangladeshi migrants – disenfranchisement of Bangladeshis from electoral rolls); Nepal – India (Madheshi cross border communities contesting the constitution). Ethno-linguistic and religious groups can thus play a role in exacerbating or mitigating conflict.

Private Security Actors: Alongside militant groups, private security firms have proliferated in recent years, playing a role in the protection of assets. Indeed, symbols of regional authority or exemplars of influence or investment can become targets. One such example can be found in November 2018, when a group of assailants attempted to enter the Chinese consulate in Karachi. The attackers belonged to the Fidayeen Majeed Brigade—a China-focused cell recently established within the Balochistan Liberation Army (EFAS, 2018). Such attacks can prompt regional disputes but also escalate the deployment of private security to protect vulnerable assets. The attack sought to bring attention to the discrimination that the Baloch have faced at the hands of successive Pakistani regimes. This perception of unfairness has been noticeably aggravated with the proliferation of Chinese workers in the sparsely populated but gas and mineral-rich province of Balochistan, which forms a critical part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Serious Organised Criminal Groups: The scale of organised crime is difficult to estimate and depends on the definition that is used. Criminality may include trafficking in narcotics, people smuggling and human trafficking, trafficking of firearms, money laundering. While transnational organised crime affects every country in the world, the nature of illicit markets and their impact differs region to region. Southeast Asia is no exception, and while it is prosperous in-part due to expanding social exchanges, trade and investment in infrastructure, the region is also challenged by increasingly aggressive organised crime networks and syndicates. Threats arising from transnational organised crime in Southeast Asia are becoming more deeply integrated within the region itself, as well as with neighbouring and connected regions. At the same time, criminal networks operating in Southeast Asia have achieved global reach, trafficking unfathomable quantities of high-profit methamphetamine, consignments of wildlife and forest products, and an increasing range of counterfeit consumer and industrial goods (UNODC, 2019). They also continue to engage in the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation.

Organised crime groups in Southeast Asia now wield unprecedented influence and control multi-billion-dollar 'industries'. Transnational organised crime syndicates use their financial power to corrupt and undermine the rule of law. Southeast Asia's array of ethnic groups, linguistic, cultural and religious differences, and the region's geographical characteristics of archipelagos and mountainous terrains present unique governance challenges. Moreover, the region consists of developed, developing and least-developed countries, which impedes the progress towards a common regional market, but also has strongly influenced the patterns of organised crime flows in the region. With different countries having varying capacities and resolve for monitoring and responding to transnational crime threats, organised criminal groups have been able to concentrate their operations in locations favourable to do business, typically those with lower capacity to implement and enforce robust countermeasures (UNODC, 2019).

Drivers of Conflict

It is important to note that territorial or border disputes defy mono-causal explanations, involving a range of factors that may exert influence during a given period or not as the case may be. This may include a combination of material and/or cultural interests. In certain circumstances, needs for resources mix up with geopolitical rivalries and power relations between neighbours (Goodhand, 2018). In other cases, nationalist ideologies can add up to economic interests. However, territorial disputes have been typically explained in terms of power relations (Mancini, 2013).

A number of theoretical positions have been mobilised to explain conflict. Realist theory suggests that changing power relations usually result in increasing conflict over territorial control, a worrying conclusion in today's Asia given the growing power of China (a country with a growingly assertive posture toward territorial claims), India, and the relevance of regional middle powers, such as Indonesia and Vietnam (Mancini, 2013).

Normative explanations refer to subjectively-formed norms, conceptions of justice, and beliefs that can motivate territorial claims and trigger conflict over disputed territories. According to this approach, the value of territory not only derives from political or economic interests, but also serves as source of sovereignty and identity both for the states and the people involved (Mancini, 2013). In the framework of this normative explanation, cultural differences should also be considered. National histories and nationalistic sentiments clearly play a role in the disputes over Kashmir between India and Pakistan, over the political status of Taiwan and Tibet, and over the South China Sea, in which China has domestically played the card of nationalism, with selective use of history in textbooks and in the media in order to emphasise what typically is referred to as "the need to re-establish national honour" (Mancini, 2013).

In Asia, the current territorial disputes might escalate to armed conflict mainly due to three factors: geopolitical shifts, competition over scarce natural resources (e.g., oil, gas, and in particular, water), and environmental degradation (Mancini, 2013). These broad categories intersect and incorporate an array of sub categories.

Geopolitics

In a **changing geopolitical environment**, territorial claims might assume new relevance in asserting the primacy of emerging powers. A mix of political, economic, and cultural motives, combined with a more nationalist reading of sovereignty can trigger confrontations over contested territories (Van Houtum, 2005, Mancini, 2013). Border conflicts intersect with geopolitics in significant and multifaceted ways. Indeed, the South Asian region is not immune to global shifts in power competition, especially involving China, India and the United States. This is clear in the disputes in the South China Seas. This has seen an increasingly assertive China assert its position against overlapping claims of Southeast Asian countries.

A fundamental shift in the attitudes of regional states can occur if China adopts aggressive policies i.e. towards India and the East Asian neighbours in an effort to assert its primacy in the Asia-Pacific region and pushes the United States to actively create balance of power coalitions to contain Chinese power and security threats (Rajagopalan, 2017).

The South and Southeast Asia region has experienced significant globalisation in terms of extra-regional trade and economic relations, although intra-regional economic interactions still remain low. Given renewed focus on regional integration (see for example India's Act East Policy and China's Belt and Road Initiative) Smaller South and Southeast Asian countries have been active in developing trade links with economic and military powers who operate in the region (namely China, U.S.A, India and Japan etc.) (Paul, 2018). Such developing connection provide both opportunities and pitfalls for actors within the region to forge connections.

Many regional powers are actively involved in complex bargaining process to gain economic assistance from key states in the region, China and India in particular. Yet, they also have been able to muster considerable economic support from both without forming military coalitions with either. The two rising powers are motivated by the fear of the smaller states joining in a coalition with their opponent in the future, but do not want to fully abandon burgeoning economic links between each other by upsetting the regional order too drastically. As a preventive strategy, the two rising powers attempt to outbid in giving economic concessions to the smaller states in the region (with China having an advantage given its deep pockets) often without a tangible results in return. As Xingi (2017) contends, the new order has offered smaller states 'room to manoeuvre' and 'upwards mobility', although it needs to be seen how far this trend can continue. This 'power of the weak' obviously has limitations, but has worked thus far to their advantage. For example, Myanmar and the stabilisation of its conflicts are crucial to China's geostrategic interests, as they occur in the territories of major Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, where two of its economic corridors pass.

Global or national rends can thus exert a significant influence on border disputes, As Paul (2017) asserts a sudden economic decline or downturn of China may encourage the regime to consolidate its economic position by competing more aggressively in the military arena. Conversely, US economic sanctions may generate nationalism among the Chinese public and the elite. Finally, nationalist forces could overrun the pragmatism that characterised the Chinese policy thus far.

Commentators such as Cotillon (2017) and Hughes (2011) have highlighted that expressions of nationalism have merged with geopolitical thinking. "Geopolitik" nationalism likens the state to a living organism that requires geopolitical space of its own in order to develop and function. This approach sees national interest, and therefore nationalism, as being characterised by the territorialisation of space (Hughes 2011: 620; Cotillon, 2017).

Resource competition

Competition over scarce natural resources can trigger conflict over contested territories. Continuing economic development and demographic expansion in Asia are fostering domestic demands for resources and control over them in disputed areas. Such competition can become a matter of survival (Mancini, 2013). This is not only evident in the need for more energy, which is intensifying the disputes in the South China Sea, but also in the need for water for agricultural use, which today absorbs 70% of water usage in the region (IWMI, 2007; Mancini, 2013: 7). Research suggests a relationship between countries sharing water and incidence of conflict and, in particular, that countries upstream of a river have a significant risk of conflict with countries downstream of the same watercourse. However, history also suggests that most of these territorial disputes did not lead to armed conflict, but rather to negotiated settlements (e.g. the

Bangladeshi-Indian dispute over the quantity of Ganges water to be released for Bangladeshi utilisation during the dry season). However, this non-violent trend can change in the future, if overpopulation, economic growth, and environmental degradation aggravated by changing climate patterns put further pressure on water sources (Mancini, 2013; Goodhand, 2018).

Population and economic growth may lead countries to compete over resources causing a flare-up of dormant territorial disputes. The South China Sea provides a case in point, being at the centre of competition driven by economic interests and prospects of access to energy resources (see section on South China Sea Conflict). Tensions and conflicts over water use are increasingly common, as a result of both high water scarcity and high water demand. The use of water resources generates political disputes between countries sharing waters within their borders (Levy & Sidel, 2011).

Environmental Issues

Climate change has a complex and multifaceted impact on border conflicts and territorial disputes, intersecting and exacerbating existing contestations over natural resources. **Environmental degradation** due to industrialisation and aggravated by climate change may exasperate the scarcity of resources. Pollution, rising sea levels, and dry rivers are all major concerns in the region that can hamper economic development and political relations (Mancini, 2013).

The UNDP (2012) Human Development Report commented that climate change was fuelling resource-based conflict across Asia. The report noted that East Asia is likely to experience increased precipitation and temperatures associated with climate change. It's also particularly exposed to natural disasters both in terms of its geographic makeup and also number of people affected. This stands to be further affected by land-use change and deforestation (UNDP, 2012: 35). With regards to South Asia, the report notes that river water in South Asia supplies both downstream and upstream countries and has increasingly become a political issue with increased tensions of water supplies. Due to climate change, Himalayan glaciers, which supply water to several of South Asia's most crucial rivers, are retreating. Because of the dependency of the rivers which draw their water from the glaciers, disrupted water supplies to the rivers could have widespread consequences for the sub region and its populations (UNDP, 2012: 39-40).

Conflict can also arise over sewage dumping or water pollution in contested areas, flaring up disputes over rivers and shore control. Pollution, for example, has been a matter of contention over the control of the Mekong River, whose waters cross China, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. However, the existence of the Mekong River Commission (1995), albeit imperfect since upper riparian countries (China and Myanmar) are not partners in the initiative, has allowed joint management of water-related issues. ASEAN membership has also been a positive factor in reducing tensions over issues such as transnational water pollution (Mancini, 2013:.8-9)

Other Factors

Serious Organised Crime (SOC) has emerged as a factor that can exacerbate violent conflict and state fragility (UNODC, 2019). It can also have a significant destabilising impact on peacebuilding and state building (UNODC, 2019). The UK Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) paper (UK Government 2011: 4) comments, "when violent conflict breaks out, the costs to the country

and the international community are enormous. Lives are lost, people displaced, trade links cut, and organised crime groups or terrorists are given an opportunity to take root, exacerbating instability".

Criminal networks and activities fuel violent conflict, finance terrorists and militias, and complicate conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2017). It is reported that Illicit networks often thrive in conflict-affected and post-conflict states by taking advantage of illicit opportunities to entrench their economic, political and social influence through corruption, rent-seeking, predation and criminal governance (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2017). Others comment that conflict affected regions represent a high cost arena within which to operate with organised criminal groups preferring to operate in more stable and less politicised borderlands, less organised criminal groups may proliferate in other areas. It is broadly accepted that the threat from external actors such as transnational armed groups and organised crime gangs is increasing (UNODC, 2019).

The interconnections between illicit flows and conflict zones is often a feature of geography: the locality of production, transit and consequences for state peripheries. The geography of illicit flows is often also a facet of central or peripheral conflicts and different forms of institutional or state control in these areas. The ability of the state to project into the hinterlands, the presence or traversing of illicit flows, and certain geographic features such as archipelagos or small islands which make surveillance difficult, can become targets for control by criminal or violent groups as provide an easy source of rents (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2017).

Weigand (2020) provides an analysis of four conflict-affected border areas: the Thailand-Malaysia border, the Myanmar-China border, the Myanmar-Bangladesh border and the (maritime) Indonesia-Philippines-Malaysia border. In each he investigates how different forms of smuggling in the area interact with the armed conflict, be it licit (petrol, rice, coffee) or illicit goods (drugs, arms, people). Critically, Weigand highlights the issue of state involvement in illicit markets, thereby challenging binaries of state and organised crime, a theme picked up in the Bangladesh-Myanmar case study. The terms licit and illicit merely obscure complex phenomena: among them, 'the crimes committed by state authorities'

Notwithstanding increasing levels of concern among national governments and international organisations with respect to the links between organised crime and conflict, much remains to be understood about the nature, extent and implications of the connectivity between the two.

3. Case Studies

In South and Southeast Asia, borders remain an issue of high politics often defining the contours of relations between the states in the region. Borders across the region have historically been 'soft' and 'porous' (Goodhand, 2018). Analysis of regional security and conflict in South and Southeast Asia requires a deeper understanding of the nature of border disputes and conflicts.

In Asia, geopolitical shifts, natural resources, and environmental degradation are a source of concern (Mancini, 2013). The South China Seas represent an area where a confluence of issues manifest and represent a particular flashpoint that could lead to confrontations for the region and beyond (Mancini, 2013). At the same time, the continuing trend toward integration in the region, the growing relevance of regional institutions (ASEAN etc.) and arrangements, and the

processes of democratisation are reasons to be optimistic about peaceful settlements of territorial disputes in (Nathan, 2010).

Crosscutting many border conflicts in the region are the legacies of colonialism with the demarcation of borders by colonial powers often ignoring ethnic and linguistic lineages of the local populace and defined historically by convenience, power sharing agreements and treaties (Mishra, 2016).

The list of disputes presented in the following section should be considered illustrative rather than exhaustive, selected to provide an insight into the multifaceted drivers of conflict. They are selected to highlight how relatively localised disputes can become global in scope as they intersect with global contestations over political or economic power, are inflamed by political actors keen to exploit grievances or exacerbated by resource scarcity. Many of the disputes examined below can be traced to the process of decolonisation and various regional and domestic struggles, subsequently being absorbed by the Cold War. Despite the end of the Cold War and the drastic regional and global transformations that followed, these disputes continue to play an important role in the relations with each other and beyond. Indeed historical contestations continue to be inscribed with new meaning as circumstances evolve.

Thailand / Cambodia Dispute(s)

Thailand and Cambodia have a number of border demarcation issues but the most important dispute between the two countries has been over an area of land of approximately 4.6 sq. km which surrounds the Hindu temple of Preah Vihear (Thai name Phra Viharn). This dispute has led to various military clashes. The temple is situated on top of a cliff in the Dangrek/Donrak mountain range located in Cambodia's Preah Vihear province and claimed by Thailand as part of its Sisaket Province. The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (2012) assert that the conflict is driven by sentiments of national identity and sovereignty issues.

In 1954, Thai troops occupied the temple and tensions between the two countries persisted until the dispute was referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1959. In 1962 an ICJ ruling awarded ownership of the temple to Cambodia. The dispute reignited in 2008, after the World Heritage Committee listed the temple as a UNESCO World Heritage site despite objections from Thailand (Wagener, 2011).

In April 2011, Cambodia filed an application to the ICJ requesting a reinterpretation of its 1962 judgment and a request for an order for provisional measures. Cambodia argued that the 1962 judgment granted sovereignty over the temple and its vicinity to Cambodia. The Thai submission to the ICJ, in response to Cambodia's claims, argued that the ongoing dispute was not over the ownership of the temple subject to the 1962 ruling but a new boundary dispute over the 4.6 sq. km surrounding the temple (Bukh, 2020).

The Thai irredentist narrative that became influential in 2008 and beyond, located the dispute within the broader discourse on the territories Thailand lost to the British and French colonial powers in the late 19th and early 20th century. As such it may seem that colonialism and, more specifically, the legacies of colonial powers' policies in Southeast Asia, are the main cause of this dispute (Bukh, 2020).

While the present dispute between Thailand and Cambodia does have its roots in the colonial period of the region, the most important factor that led to the escalation of the dispute in 2008 and the subsequent clashes was domestic politics in Thailand. At that time, the issue was reignited and politicised in Thailand in the context of the domestic struggle between the so-called 'royalists' on one side and the supporters of the former Prime Minister Taksin Shinawatra on the other (Bukh, 2020). It is thus apparent that border disputes can become pawns in domestic politics i.e. demonstrations of power to local audience or evidence of nationalist credentials.

Vietnam / Cambodia Territorial Dispute

Violence along Vietnam Cambodia border highlight that, conflict can emerge in areas that had hitherto been considered settled. The Moc Bai – Ba Vet border issue was considered resolved in 2006 following an agreement between the two nations' prime ministers. The demarcation of the 1,200 km long border was due to be completed in 2012, but 20% of it remains unmarked (Cotillon, 2017).

In recent years, tensions on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border have begun to flare up again as anti-Vietnamese nationalism and a perceived Vietnamese threat begins to regain momentum. In 2009, Sam Rainsy, the leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), allegedly encouraged villagers to uproot border markers in Svay Rieng province, flaring up tensions and causing violent clashes between Vietnamese and Cambodian civilians (Cotillon, 2015).

In June 2015, tensions culminated into violent clashes on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border. This incident was precipitated by CNRP lawmakers Real Camerin and Sam An who led around 250 Cambodian activists armed with sticks into Vietnamese territory. They were met by Vietnamese security officers and local residents who tried to prevent them from trespassing. The altercation soon escalated into violent clashes between the two groups and dozens of Vietnamese and Cambodian nationals were injured (Cotillion, 2017). Here again the intersection of domestic political narratives inscribe regional conflict, at times being utilised by vested local interests. Given the sensitivity of border regions, such conflicts can impact on national cooperation and sow the seeds of discord.

India / Pakistan Dispute(s) - Jammu and Kashmir

India and Pakistan have a number of territorial disputes but the most important one is over Kashmir. One-third of Kashmir is under Pakistani administration and two-thirds are controlled by India. With a combined population of over 17.5 million (Bukh, 2020) and a total territory of over 300,000 sq. km it is the largest territorial dispute in the world in terms of the size of the disputed territory and the population that inhabits it.

The dispute over Kashmir has led to countless deaths and is a major source of conflict between two nuclear powers, playing an important role not only in regional relations but also, in various ways, in the policies of major powers such as the United States, China and Russia (Bukh, 2020). At the same time, the origins can be traced to the legacy of the British colonial rule in India and the nature of the British departure from the Indian subcontinent in 1947–8.

Border skirmishes resulting in loss of life of both soldiers and civilians are frequent. Between 2004 and 2007, the two governments held talks to establish a framework for the resolution of the

dispute, but the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks interrupted this process. Both governments officially claim all of Kashmir. However, Pakistan came to recognise the existence of a movement for independence in the valley of Kashmir and the improbability of inclusion of all of Kashmir within its borders. Likewise it seems that India does not expect to include the areas of Kashmir under Pakistani control in its territory. Despite these important changes in the two countries' positions, the prospects for resolution of the dispute in the foreseeable future are dim (Blarel and Ebert, 2015; Bukh, 2020).

Tensions in the Indo-Pak border can also be exacerbated be competition over resources, for example, tensions between India and Pakistan have risen from over the Baglihar dam construction over River Chenab in Indian-administered Kashmir. Historically water war has been prevented via the Indus Waters Treaty signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan, which gives the former exclusive rights to the waters of the Eastern Rivers until the point they flow into Pakistan, with the latter granted exclusive rights to the Western Rivers. India has always held the upper hand over the Indus, however, given it controls upstream flow, leaving Pakistan vulnerable to India's whims (Bukh, 2020).

As noted by (Werleman, 2020), the United Nations has already defined Pakistan as a "water scarce" country, impacted by climate change reduced rainfall patterns. India's exertion of control over Kashmir, and reduced water flow as a result of hydroelectricity projects, could spur major conflict between India and Pakistan in the not too distant future. Projections suggest that by the year 2050, water accessibility for human consumption will have dropped by 40 percent, potentially leading to water based conflict.

India / China Dispute(s)

China and India share the world's longest unmarked border. The territorial dispute between the two countries over territory in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. Aksai Chin is approximately 38,000 sq. km in size and is mostly uninhabited. It is controlled by China as part of its Xinjiang Autonomous Region and is claimed by India as part of Jammu and Kashmir. Arunachal Pradesh, referred to as South Tibet in China, is a state in the north eastern part of India with a population of about 1.2 million. China claims approximately 90,000 sq. km in the eastern section of the border which more or less corresponds to the territory of Arunachal Pradesh (Brunet-Jailly ed., 2015).

The dispute over Aksai Chin relates to the Indo–Pakistani dispute over Kashmir discussed in the previous case study. When the British ended their rule in the subcontinent, there was no demarcated border in Kashmir. In the years that followed India's independence, Indian governmental documents had depicted the border between India and China in this region as 'undefined'. China came into possession of this territory when it occupied Tibet in 1951. It was only in 1953 that India made claims to Aksai Chin based on the boundary of pre-colonial Dogra rulers of Kashmir (Brunet-Jailly ed., 2015). In 1986–7, tensions escalated in the Arunachal Pradesh area with countries expanding their military presence.

Contemporary India / Chinese relationship are largely cordial and a key factors in regional stability. After the 1987 incident, relations between the two Asian giants transformed into a cold peace and while both sides officially maintain their territorial claims, whilst accepting the status quo. Sporadic conflict continues to erupt in the Indo-China region. Since 5 May 2020, Chinese and Indian troops have engaged in aggressive melee, face-offs and skirmishes at locations along

the Sino-Indian border, including near the disputed Pangong Lake in Ladakh and the Tibet Autonomous Region, and near the border between Sikkim and the Tibet Autonomous Region. Additional clashes also took place at locations in eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Nepal / India Dispute

In South Asia, the movement of people and goods across borders is strictly controlled by states. However, there are some exceptions. India and Nepal's border is mostly peaceful and porous with minimal restrictions on the movement of goods and people. In 2014 India's current Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Nepal, a move significant for India–Nepal relations. The tour of Modi energised the India–Nepal ties with the signing of several important agreements. India offered a soft line of credit amounting to US$1 billion for the execution of infrastructure and development projects (Tripathi, 2019).

Despite predominantly cordial relations there are times when border issues have taken a critical turn. One such recent border-related problem between India and Nepal was witnessed during the Madheshi movement. In 2015, an agitating section of the Madheshi community in Nepal blocked the India–Nepal border. Due to the sociocultural proximity of Madheshi community with India, the blockade of the Indo-Nepal border has had repercussions for bilateral ties (Tripathi, 2019).

Madhesh is a lowland region of Southern Nepal that shares border with India. The Madheshi community predominantly resides in the border region between India and Nepal. This community has a close relationship with the people of north India. Trouble escalated in the region when disgruntled leaders of the community declared disagreements with Nepal's new constitution (Haviland, 2015). The geographical and social proximity with the Madheshi community led India to raise the alarm at this juncture, expressing apprehension of spill over of disturbances to the Indian side. India attempted to convey its concern to Nepal about the imminent outbursts of the Madheshi community (Tripathi, 2019).

The Nepali government refused to acknowledge the demands of the agitators and the situation deteriorated. Intensifying the agitation, protestors in Madhesh blocked the India–Nepal border in September 2015. As a landlocked country, hugely dependent on India for its international trade transit, the blockade disrupted not only the big and small businesses but also the daily lives of ordinary people in Nepal. Nepal accused India of facilitating this unrest by implicitly supporting the Madheshi community in the blockade. The Nepali government termed this standoff as 'unofficial blockade by India'. This blockade created fissures in the Nepali polity. It also impacted India's image in Nepal.

It has also taken a geopolitical dimension and reflective of completion between China and India. Indeed, if China is seen to invest in Nepal, it is also interpreted as an anti-India investment. In general, there is a lack of positive discourse on India–Nepal relations. Normalcy returned after the end of the blockade. Although officially the border between Indian and Nepal remains the same, perceptions have changed. Tripathi (2019) asserts that there is now a new mental border between the two countries. Moreover, the missing security concern in relation to the India–Nepal border is no longer valid. The larger South Asian border politics that is characterised by security dilemma is now also applicable to the India–Nepal border.

Bangladesh / India Dispute(s)

The India–Bangladesh border is the fifth largest land border in the world measuring circa 4096.7 km. The India–Bangladesh border is viewed as a 'security concern' by New Delhi, and has sought to securitise the border with Bangladesh viewing with concern the porous nature of the border making it accessible to the militant groups and smugglers (Lakshman & Jha, n.d.).

Commenting more broadly on the North-Eastern border regions, Lakshman and Jha (n.d.) note that the perception of terrorist infrastructure in safe havens across borders; the growth and internationalisation of organised criminal syndicates with powerful political influence and patronage; and a perceived strengthening network of institutions for the communal mobilisation of the migrants – particularly through a growing complex of *madrassas* (seminaries) – are among the trends along the India-Bangladesh border that are seen to exacerbate tension. These problems are further compounded by non-linear boundaries, borders that are poorly delimited, and intermingled ethnic groups along both sides of the border. The length of the border, difficult terrain and harsh climatic conditions present unique monitoring challenges in the region. The seamlessness of the movement of migrants, as Hazarika argues, gives it a critical, even dangerous, edge especially as such movements take place in an area already troubled by insurgencies (Baruah, 2007).

Whilst this report focuses on cross 'national border tensions, conflict is also evident within national borders but across sub-national lines. This too has the potential to spill over into regional conflict when ethnic, linguistic or religious bonds traverse such boundaries (Baruah, 2007).

Bangladesh / Myanmar Dispute(s)

The influence of geopolitics is evident in border disputes between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Myanmar occupies a strategic location bordering China and India, and connected with the Indian Ocean through the Bay of Bengal. It is the only land transportation hub connecting East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Its location of geo-strategic importance has made it the focus of interests for the world's major powers such as China, Japan, the United States, India, and the European Union (Ahmad, 2017; Dai & Hongchao, 2014).

Both China and India are using Myanmar's ports in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, for exports and imports. They have also invested significantly in development projects including oil, gas, electricity, regional connectivity, and special economic zones in Rakhine state. Relationships between Bangladesh and Myanmar in contrast are less cordial, having not benefited significantly from Myanmar's natural resources, strategic location, and trade and investments.

Myanmar is a neighbouring country of Bangladesh with a long border. It has huge natural resources such as oil, gas, forestry, fisheries, agricultural land and other mineral resources. There has been a long dispute between Bangladesh and Myanmar regarding the maritime boundary demarcation. The dispute is about the demarcation of the territorial waters, continental shelves, and exclusive economic zones of both Bangladesh and Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal. On 14th march 2012, the Law of the Sea Tribunal (ITLOS) delivered a judgment on delimitation of the maritime boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar. This judgment marked a distinctive legal success for Bangladesh. After the tribunal's verdict, Bangladesh is be able to

explore oil and gas in the Bay of Bengal, where a huge amount of reserves are expected to be in existence (Ahamed et al. 2020).

Criminality has also emerged as a significant issue in the region with Myanmar emerging as a significant hub for the production and distribution of methamphetamine and its derivatives. Ahamed et al (2020) assert that significant numbers are involved in this illicit trade in border regions. Yaaba - a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine – has emerged as a particular issue in areas of Bangladesh including Cox's Bazar. Trade in this cheap drug has also spread to Chittagong and Dhaka cities.

Given the value of this drug trade, law enforcement bodies have become implicated with some asserting that law enforcement agencies are the main perpetrators and beneficiaries of the yaaba trade in Bangladesh. They continue that the police force are involved in kidnapping, cross-firing, persecution, and filing of false cases against many innocent people, and yaaba is used as a tool through which they can easily demand ransom (Alam, 2018).

National ethnic conflict within Myanmar also has a cross border dimension with the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) reported to be operating out of and recruiting Rohingyas from refugee camps (Alam, 2018). Such localised conflict between ARSA and Myanmar can also become globalised as militant groups forge links. It is reported that Al-Qaeda in the sub-continent issued a declaration where they invited Bangladesh's Muslims to provide support to the Rohingyas. It is not clear whether the Al-Qaeda has a link with ARSA or not. Nevertheless, extremist networks in Bangladesh and Myanmar exist through which the ARSA, and Buddhists extremist are gaining influence in the region (Alam, 2018)

South China Sea Maritime Disputes

The territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea are considered some of the most complex conflicts in the region if not worldwide (Bukh, 2020). The disputed areas are abundant in natural resources such as gas and oil and also carry strategic importance, as roughly half of the world's commercial shipping passes through them. These disputes play an important role not only in the relations among the claimants but also the foreign policies of countries such as Japan and the United States. The disputes involve overlapping maritime, territorial and fishing rights and claims by China, Taiwan, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia (CSIS, 2015).

The South China Sea is one of the largest fishing grounds in the world with rich biological diversity, and access to fisheries plays an important role in the dispute among the Chinese provinces bordering the South China Sea, Hainan and Guangdong, Vietnam, and the Philippines (CSIS, 2015). The sea accounts for approximately 10 per cent of the annual global fisheries catch, making it extremely important to the fishing industries of nearby countries.

At the same time, the growing demand for energy resources, particularly oil and gas, to support China's development and Beijing's desire to reduce its dependency on Middle Eastern oil, are the main reasons why China is unwilling to compromise over its territorial claims (Bukh, 2020; CSIS, 2015). However, because of the tensions, the majority of hydrocarbon estimates in areas such as the Spratly Islands remain unproven.

The South China Sea also occupies a significant geostrategic position in terms of international shipping. The majority of energy shipments and raw materials that pass through the Malacca Straits continue on through the South China Sea to countries such as China and Japan. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has recognised the strategic importance of the sea, and has taken steps to bolster its capabilities within the region. The U.S. also has an interest in protecting the sea lanes that run through the area, as it considers open and stable maritime commons as essential to international trade and prosperity.

China, Vietnam and the Philippines have made the most significant and forceful claims of sovereignty in the South China Sea. The former's claim to the Spratly Islands may have far-reaching consequences if it intends to claim full exclusive economic zones (EEZs) around those islands, which would overlap significantly with the EEZs claimed by the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam (Morton, 2016). While Beijing may seek to pursue this goal, it may also be thinking of demanding "historical rights" other parts of the sea within the nine-dashed line (Bukh, 2020). The uncertainty as to what China's legal claims are, and apparent attempts to enforce sovereignty in areas that are too far away from its coasts to be part of its EEZ, has put it at odds with other claimants given that many of these areas are far closer to the coastlines of other claimants.

Chinese domestic politics also plays a role in stoking conflict in the region. In particular, competing mandates and lack of coordination among Chinese government agencies, many of which strive to increase their power and budget, have exacerbated tensions in the South China Sea. For example, the Chinese navy has used maritime tensions to justify its modernisation, and nationalist sentiment around territorial claims, further compound the problem.

A more immediate conflict risk lies in the growing number of law enforcement and paramilitary vessels playing an increasing role in disputed territories without a clear legal framework. They have been involved in most of the recent incidents, including the prolonged standoff between China and the Philippines in April 2012 in Scarborough Reef.

Geopolitics plays a particular role in the simmering conflicts in the south China sea. In 2010, Hillary Clinton re-affirmed that freedom of navigation in the South China Sea was a U.S. national interest, and more recently Donald Trump has pursued an explicitly antagonistic policy towards China. Commentators highlight that China sees ASEAN countries using the U.S. as a hedge to counter-balance its growing power, and Washington has been using them to expand its regional presence (CSIS, 2015; Bukh, 2020).

Bukh (2020) comments that the Chinese government practises a synchronised strategy to enhance its power in the region on the one hand and on the other hand, tries to keep the extra-regional powers at bay. Simultaneously, in an order to ensure dominance over the region, China tries to divide the ASEAN members on the South China Sea issue by appealing to economically weaker countries like Cambodia The territorial disputes involving Cambodia on the one hand and other ASEAN members on the other hand further instigate Phnom Penh to accept China's regional actions, even at the cost of a disintegrated ASEAN. In response, Kizekova and Gerstl (2017) highlight that ASEAN follows the path of multitrack diplomacy and engaging China with the regional institutionalism initiatives to avoid further escalation of tensions in the region.

Sino-Vietnamese territorial dispute

Vietnam's maritime territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea has been ongoing since 1974, when Vietnam accused China of the opportunistic takeover of the Paracel Islands (Path 2011: 190). The Sino-Vietnamese territorial dispute in the South China Sea is concentrated around two archipelagos: the Paracel and Spratly. In 2009, China submitted a United Nations (UN) Note Verbale in response to the one jointly submitted by Vietnam and Malaysia protesting China's claims. China's UN Note Verbale stated that it possesses "indisputable sovereignty over the islands in the South China Sea and the adjacent waters, and enjoys sovereignty rights and jurisdiction over the relevant water as well as subsoil thereof" (UN 2009).

4. References

Ahamed, A et al. (2020). Bangladesh-Myanmar Border Relations: A Study of Some Geopolitical and Economic Issues. European Scientific Journal. Vol.16, No.22. http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2020.v16n22p320

Ansorg, N. (2011). How Does Militant Violence Diffuse in Regions? Regional Conflict Systems in International Relations and Peace and Conflict Studies. International Journal of Conflict and Violence Vol 5 (1). 173-187. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/276528767.pdf

Avis, W. (2019). Current trends in violent conflict. K4D Helpdesk Report 565. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5cf669ace5274a07692466db/565_Trends_in_Violent_Conflict.pdf

Blarel, N. & Ebert, H, (2015). Explaining the evolution of contestation in South Asia. International Politics volume 52. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/ip.2014.44

Brunet-Jailly, E. (2015) Border Disputes: a Global Encyclopaedia. BC-Clio

Bukh, A. (2020). Territorial Disputes in Asia: Colonialism, Cold War and Domestic Politics. in: Inoguchi, T. ed. The SAGE Handbook of Asian Foreign Policy.Sage. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338633837_Territorial_Disputes_in_Asia_Colonialism_Cold_War_and_Domestic_Politics

Costa Ribeiro, W. & Mello Saint' Anna F. (2014). Water security and interstate conflict and cooperation. Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica. Vol. 60/3 573-596. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/78519589.pdf

Cotillon, Hannah (2017). Territorial disputes and nationalism: a comparative case study of China and Vietnam. Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 1 (36). pp. 51-88. ISSN 1868-1034. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/81185/

EFAS (2018). Attack on Chinese Consulate in Karachi: Wake-up call for Pakistan and China to address grievances of the Baloch. EFAS. https://www.efsas.org/commentaries/attack-on-chinese-consulate-in-karachi-wake-up-call-for-pak-and-china-to-address-grievances-of/

Emmers R. (2009) Geopolitics and Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia, New York: Routledge

Fravel M. T. (2008) Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes: Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Laine, J. (2016). The Multiscalar Production of Borders. Geopolitics. Volume 21, Issue 3. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2016.1195132

Goodhand, J. (2018). Borderlands, Brokers and Peacebuilding: War to Peace Transitions Viewed from the Margins. CEPA. http://www.borderlandsasia.org/uploads/1579261490_The%20Centrality%20of%20the%20Margins.pdf

International Crisis Group. (2012). Stirring up the South China Sea (I). International Crisis Group. https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/223-stirring-up-the-south-china-sea-i.pdf

Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (2012). Dispute over Prea Vihear: Seen Problems, Unseen Stakes. IPCS. http://www.ipcs.org/issue_select.php?recNo=474

IWMI (2007). A Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture. IWMI. https://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/assessment/files_new/synthesis/Summary_SynthesisBook.pdf

Levy, B. and Sidel, V. (2011). Water Rights and Water Fights: Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Before They Boil Over. Am J Public Health. 101 (5): 778–780. https://dx.doi.org/10.2105%2FAJPH.2010.194670

Mancini, F. (2013). Uncertain Borders: Territorial Disputes in Asia. ISPI. https://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analysis_1 80_2013_0.pdf

Mishra, S. (2016). The Colonial Origins of Territorial Disputes in South Asia. The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies. Vol. 3, No. 1. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26664123?seq=1

O'Dowd, L. (2012) Contested States, Frontiers and Cities in Wilson, T and Donnan (eds) (2012) A Companion to Border Studies Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, UK, pp. 139-157.

Paul, T.V. (2019). When balance of power meets globalization: China, India and the small states of South Asia. Politics. 39 (1). https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0263395718779930

Rajagoplan, R. (2017). India's Strategic Choices: China and the Balance of Power in Asia. Carnegie India. https://carnegieindia.org/2017/09/14/india-s-strategic-choices-china-and-balance-of-power-in-asia-pub-73108

Rolland, N. et al. (2019). Where the Belt Meets the Road: Security in a Contested South Asia. Asia Policy. Volume 14 (2). 1-41. https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/asiapolicy14-2_where_the_belt_meets_the_road_rt_apr2019.pdf

Shaw, M. & Reitano, T. (2017). Global Illicit Flows and Local Conflict Dynamics: The Case for Pre-Emptive Analysis and Experimental Policy Options. United Nations University Centre for Policy Research Crime-Conflict Nexus Series: No 2. https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/UNU-CPR-Global-Illicit-Flows-and-Local-Conflict-Dynamics-web.pdf

Tripathi, D. (2019). Influence of Borders on Bilateral Ties in South Asia: A Study of Contemporary India–Nepal Relations. International Studies 56 (2–3) 186–200.
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0020881719851420

Tripathi, D. & Chaturvedi, S. (2019). South Asia: Boundaries, Borders and Beyond. Journal of Borderlands Studies. Volume 35 Issue 2. https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2019.1669483

UK Government (2011). Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS). UK Government.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27370/bsos_july2011.pdf

UNDP (2012). Climate Change Fuelling Resource-Based Conicts in the Asia-Pacific. UNDP.
https://www.uncclearn.org/wp-content/uploads/library/undp304.pdf

UNODC (2019). Transnational Organized Crime in Southeast Asia: Evolution, Growth and Impact. UNODC.
https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/Publications/2019/SEA_TOCTA_2019_web.pdf

Van Houtum (2005). The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries. Geopolitics, Vol. 10, No. 04.
http://www.unice.fr/crookall-cours/iup_geopoli/docs/geopoliticsborders2005.pdf

Wagener, M. (2011). Lessons from Preah Vihear: Thailand, Cambodia, and the Nature of Low-Intensity Border Conflicts. Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs.
https://doi.org/10.1177%2F186810341103000302

Weigand, F. (2020). Conflict and Transnational Crime: Borders, Bullets & Business in Southeast Asia. Edward Elgar.

Werleman, C. (2020). The human cost of India's Baglihar dam in disputed Kashmir. TRTWorld.
https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/the-human-cost-of-india-s-baglihar-dam-in-disputed-kashmir-38796

Xing, L. (2017). The Rise of Emerging Powers & China and the Enlargement of 'Room for Maneuver' and 'Upward Mobility'. Rising Powers in Global Governance.
https://risingpowersproject.com/the-rise-of-emerging-powers-china-and-the-enlargement-of-room-for-maneuver-and-upward-mobility/

Suggested citation

Avis, W. (2020). *Border disputes and micro-conflicts in South and Southeast Asia.* K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

About this report