The Resurgence of Territorial and Maritime Issues in the Post-Modern Era

Chae-Han Kim

Professor of Political Science, Hallym University, Korea

As the launch of *The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies* demonstrates, there has been a recent resurgence of territorial and maritime issues that have plagued both ancient and modern societies for centuries. Territorial borders have evolved over time: pre-modern, modern and post-modern. Most literature concerning border issues, however, is just about modern borders. Recent territorial disputes have been undertaken with the assumption that all boundaries are clear.

Figure 1
Clear Boundary versus Unclear Boundary

However, pre-modern boundaries were never made clear. The two circles in Figure 1 are drawn to the same size. As the periphery of the right circle is colored too pale, it looks smaller than the left. *De facto* jurisdiction does not reach the periphery of the right circle. Therefore pre-modern borders may be expressed as the circle on the right in Figure 1.
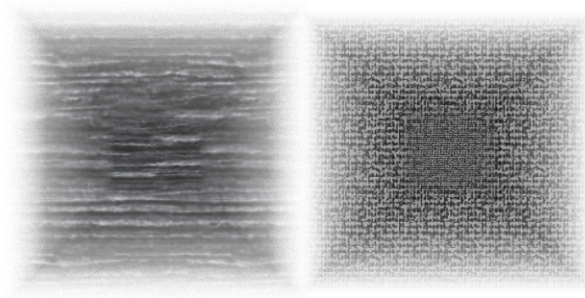
Figure 2
Pre-Modern Borders and Peripheries

Figure 2 shows the characteristics of pre-modern borders and peripheries. The boundaries were rarely made clear. Even when the boundaries were defined, they did not work well as real boundaries. Thus, the peripheries were autonomous and did not belong to any centralized entity. There have been many armed clashes in peripheral areas. Most of these clashes were not made between two central governments, but between a central government on one side and a local entity on the other. These conflicts did not come from the fact that the central governmental jurisdictions overlapped. Instead, they became conflicts over peripheries that were not controlled completely by central governments.

Borders are also disputed historically. It should be noted that pre-modern residents, not directly related to modern nations, are not eligible to compose borders of modern states. Modern borders and pre-modern borders do not necessarily coincide.
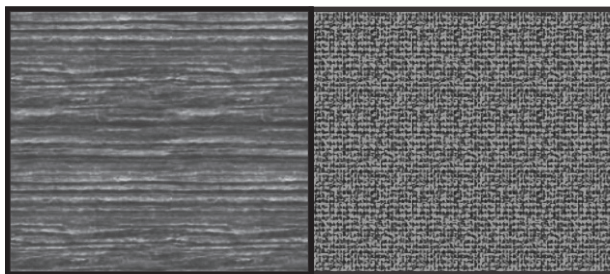

Figure 3
Modern Borders and Peripheries

As shown in Figure 3 of the modern era, nation-states have sought to expand their jurisdiction by making their boundaries clear. National borders have become

clear as nation-states have tried to maximize the size of their jurisdiction. In modern border disputes, the issue of borders has been perceived as a zero-sum situation in which if one wins an amount then the other loses the same amount.

Maritime boundaries have not been fixed even in the modern era since the sea remained outside modern peripheries. Many current border disputes are maritime ones. Modern peripheries did not tend to be friendly to foreign nations. Even though some peripheries were forced to belong to a specific centralized nation, their residents did not feel a sense of belonging to their nation and tended to dismiss their central government as an outsider as well. This is because the interests of peripheries were not well represented by their central government. The term frontier is regarded as being positive and can be compared to the term pioneer by central governments, but it is seen negatively as an imperialistic penetration by local societies.
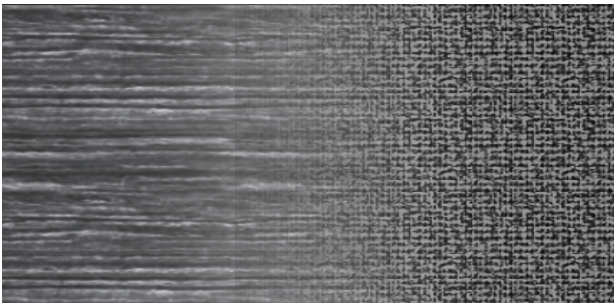

Figure 4
Post-Modern Borders and Peripheries

Figure 4 symbolizes post-modern borders and peripheries in comparison to modern as well as pre-modern ones. International flows are connected through borders and various governance works across borders. The interests and concerns of post-modern peripheries are well represented. Non-national actors such as international organizations and non-governmental organizations work as actors for peripheries, which have not been acceptable in the modern era. This change is called glocalization. The lives of peripheries belong to their local residents and are led by local as well as global interests without respect to their nationality.

This order of time-series sequence is not always true everywhere. The pre-modern, modern, and post-modern characteristics are mixed in current territorial and maritime issues. Therefore, to understand current territorial and maritime issues, we need a conceptual map of borders that includes all three eras.
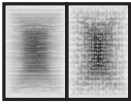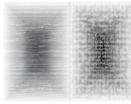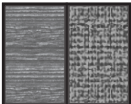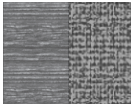
	Line (Wall)	Area (Route)
Edge (Unilateral, Centripetal)	Delimitation	Periphery
Boundary (Bilateral, Centrifugal)	Demarcation	March

Table 1
Four Conceptual Borders

Table 1 distinguishes among four kinds of borders through two criteria. First, a border may be considered as either the edge of a political entity or as the boundary between two political entities. The edge is far from the center of a centripetal entity while the boundary distinguishes two different centrifugal entities.

Second, a border may be either a line or an area. A line may be an impassable wall or protector distinguishing between in and out while an area may be a passable route or window mixing in and out. This wall is a jurisdiction over people, resources and money. The wall controls their passage and protects against disease and other damage. If a wall is said to be a modern border, a route may be a postmodern border.

A border between militarily or ideologically warring neighbors is a 'demarcation' as seen in Table 1. In some cases, residents of border districts show more of an adversarial attitude toward neighboring nations than do those of central districts. If this is applied to Figure 1, the periphery of the circle is darker than its center. These are observed in border districts of on-going wars or ideological confrontations. This is the phenomenon of 'demarcation'.

On the other hand, a border may yield mutual interests if it works as a path for human and ecological interchange instead of exclusive ownership. Inhabitants of a 'periphery' in Table 1 do not distinguish between their own nation and neighboring nations. Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserves containing sparse populations are an important route for ecological values. For example, the Crown of the Continent (Glacier National Park of the US and Waterton National Park of Canada) lies in the center of the Rocky Mountains where Albert, British Columbia, and Montana meet. Glacier-Waterton was designated in 1932 as the first international peace park in the world before Glacier and Waterton were registered as a Biosphere Reserve in 1976

and 1979, respectively. This is the case of a 'periphery' in Table 1. Similarly, the International Sonoran Desert Alliance is a successful border cooperation between the US and Mexico. The ISDA is not a bilateral, but a tri-lateral or tri-cultural organization with Native American (O'odham) Reservations included.

'Delimitation' and 'march' are intermediate modes of borders between 'demarcation' and 'periphery'. If a border as a clear boundary line has a strong characteristic of an edge differentiated from its center, then it may be called 'delimitation'. As more people are settled into a 'delimitation' border by some central governments, the border tends to take on a characteristic of 'demarcation'.

Last, if a border is a non-edge of a relatively large size across a boundary, then it may be called a 'march'. South African rivers are de *jure* borders. However, there are frequent trans-boundary activities which may or may not be cooperative. A border of 'march' with a relatively dense population is not differentiated from its center.

Under this framework of border concept shown in Table 1, border cooperation is more likely in the 'periphery' as an edge area. Such actors as international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and local societies seem to play a more positive role in border cooperation than do national governments. Border cooperation is more likely to be achieved when local interests as well as global needs are satisfied. Such cooperation may ease confrontation between central governments. JTMS will deal with post-modern borders as well as modern.

The first issue of any journal shows what its aims are. The titles of the articles included in this issue vary. This issue covers almost all continental areas across the world such as the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. Territorial and maritime topics are approached very differently by using such frameworks as selectorate theory, functionalism, colonialism, divided nation diplomacy, Islamic law, and ICJ rulings. Colonial rule, domestic institution, and bilateral non-Western law seem to matter in the following articles while functionalism and ICJ ruling are criticized by some authors of this issue. The forthcoming issues of JTMS are expected to discuss any territorial and maritime subject through various research methods.

The editorial board of JTMS is composed of world-class scholars in political science, sociology, international law, international relations, peace science, and history. As shown in its editorial board, JTMS accepts different perspectives both traditional and new, left or right. Indeed contradictory arguments over peace and sovereignty have been made by parties concerned; however, logical reasoning is required. Finally, it should be noted that any article, including this guest editor's note, does not necessarily represent the publisher's view.