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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 235,000 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 drew up these territories. 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 considerable 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 efficient and effective 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.

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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 & Security Bulletin series has also been reduced to £15 per Briefing, which 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.

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. 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


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.

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

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.

Astrid Alvarez

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

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

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.

River Boundaries: Practicalities & Solutions

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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 ‘barrels’, 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, designed to help policymakers and practitioners develop border management strategies which strike the best possible balance between these apparently conflicting goals, will involve practical instruction on a range of topics which are often overlooked elsewhere, including: managing border crossings; monitoring and controlling 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.

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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 delineation, 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.
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Full details of the workshop programme can be found in the flyer accompanying this newsletter and at www.dur.ac.uk/workshops/2008/negotiation.

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Creepling jurisdiction! The exercise of control over maritime space

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The impact of climate change on sovereignty

The management of transboundary resources

Sovereignty and Antarctica

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Conference announcement

The State of Sovereignty

Durham University, 1-3 April 2009

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**Borders**

**Issue 7 • Spring 2008**

**Editorial:**

Getting our feet wet: the challenge of river boundaries

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Keep up to date with boundary-related news at www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/news

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Email: m.pratt@durham.ac.uk
for information about research and consultancy services

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

- 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.

**Borderlines**

**NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS**