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Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka. Sumantra Bose.

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Book Notes

Sumantra Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. \$27.95 hardcover.

Despite the amazing achievements of modern science and technology and reductions in the incidence of global poverty, ill health and other social ills, the perpetuation of conflict based on religious, cultural and ethnic difference continues unabated and seems to be particularly intractable. Although conflicts of these kinds have claimed millions of lives and are widely condemned, hardly a month goes by without some new conflict erupting somewhere in the world. Tragically, these conflicts inevitably involve the mass destruction of property, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of ordinary people and the maiming and slaughter of innocents.

In this informative book, Bose documents conflicts in five regions of the world that are specifically linked to territorial disputes. The contested lands he discusses are Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka. Of course, the issue is not territory as such, but rather the association between territory and identity. Rooted in tradition and belief, the struggle for land is inextricably linked to culture, language and religion. It is also rooted in economic realities and in social relationships and power structures.

Bose has an extraordinarily sensitive and in-depth knowledge of each situation. He not only analyzes the cultural, linguistic and ethnic dimensions of each situation, he also describes the historical evolution of each conflict in depth and pays attention to the personalities and movements on both sides of the struggle. Although the attachment to land is related to an understandable historic sense of ownership and cultural identity, it is also manipulated by political entrepreneurs. Sadly, the attachment is characterized by a common turn to violence.

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The bulk of the book is concerned with the historical, cultural and political dimensions of these conflicts. These are analyzed in great depth and offer an incisive yet extremely readable account which will serve as a useful summary for anyone wishing to know more about each situation. The author is also able to offer a balanced view which dispassionately examines the positions on each side yet does not shirk from exposing blatant injustices. However, the best part of the book is its introduction, which provides a general analysis of the cause of conflicts involving land as well as the best means of addressing them. Although Bose recapitulates some of these general principles in the book's conclusion, a more extensive exposition would have been helpful, especially with regard to the issue of how these conflicts can be managed and resolved.

Bose argues that solutions that transcend a zero-sum strategy must be found and that they must be found quickly. Currently popular incremental approaches, he argues, seldom work. In addition, success is most likely achieved through third party engagement, particularly by powerful intermediaries. He shows, for example, how the Palestinian issue has been left to fester because of a lack of decisiveness and determination by successive American presidents. He also sees merit in consociationism and the use of "soft borders" between disputed territories. Although it is a pity that Bose did not discuss these and other strategies in more detail, it is to be hoped that future publications will develop these insights and form the basis for effective interventions that can address the deadly conflicts which continue to plague the modern world.

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Lena Dominelli (Ed.), *Revitalising Communities in a Globalising World*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007. \$114.95 hardcover.

Globalization, a term which covers a wide range of political, economic, and cultural movements, has become a fashionable catchphrase in recent political and academic debate.