Book Discussion

Madeleine Reeves, *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural CentralAsia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014)*

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Border Work is Complex

George Gavrilis, Visiting Research Fellow, Columbia University

On a tour of the Afghan-Pakistan border a decade or so ago, Afghanistan's minister of the interior was in for a rude awakening. A number of guards at one Afghan-controlled crossing, he learned, went home at the end of each workday to Pakistan. The minister was shocked yet unsurprised to have Pakistani citizens on his payroll for such a sensitive task. After all, the border had always been an area of intermingling and mobility, and cross-border relationships often trumped the ability of one state or another to impose order and separation. The minister recounted the story to me, laughing at the memory. Although a person of the highest state authority, he was in no way affronted by the situation. It was clear that border work is complex.

As I read through *Border Work*, my memory of the above conversation with the Afghan minister kept coming to mind—though the fine book that Madeleine Reeves has written is not about Afghanistan. I'll come back to the minister's story later, but first I want to lay out the argument in *Border Work*.

Border Work is a rich ethnography of rural communities in the Fergana Valley in Central Asia and their interaction with the state. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the valley was divided among three newly independent states—Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Reeves studies how rural populations alternately ignored and defied attempts by their respective states to impose a boundary, restrict movement across that boundary, collect customs taxes, and conduct security checks.

Reeves explains that we should focus on "mobility rather than statis" to better understand what states and their border practices mean for rural populations (138). After all, rural communities are highly mobile and kinetic, and their relationships with other communities across borders allow them access to essential goods, services, and cultural rituals. When rural geographies are suddenly divided by a state border with official guards and agents, relation- ships are disrupted, slowed, and damaged. Yet rural populations do not take the border control practices of the state as sacrosanct. In some cases, civilian

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populations accede to the authority of lowly border guards that embody the state; in others, they reject representatives of the state. According to Reeves, rural communities often defy guards and expose them to be phantoms of state authority—to use a phrase popular in Batken, they are mere "goats in uniform" (14, 242, 243).

Border Work is based on deep fieldwork that Reeves conducted throughout the Fergana Valley in places that most scholars do not reach, at least not for prolonged periods of time. The book is a reminder that rural populations in the Fergana and even in so-called isolated places like Batken in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan's Sokh enclave are far more globalized and politically savvy than is often expected. Thanks to fieldwork, the book's strongest moments are found in ethnographic stories that Reeve's uses to illustrate her most essential arguments.

For example, Reeves tells the story of Shurab, a once-prosperous Soviet mining town that has descended into decrepitude and abandonment. Trapped in a no-man's land along the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Shurab is a victim of states demarcating borders and restricting movement (242). Reeves describes a disused train engine that rusts and crumbles away and an apartment complex that slowly collapses, brick-by-brick. The prosperity of local communities is sacrificed at the hands of two states that place greater value on national sovereignty and territoriality.[1]

Another vivid story takes place along the Tajik-Uzbek border as group of Tajik citizens travel to Uzbekistan to bury a man who has just passed away. The man was born in Uzbekistan during the Soviet period in a predominantly Tajik village. The Uzbek border guards stop the funeral party and insist that they return to Tajikistan: "If he is Tajik, bury him in Tajikistan!" (150). Unable to carry out the man's wish to be laid to rest in his ancestral village, the group reluctantly returns to Dushanbe and conducts the funeral there.

In a third vignette, Kyrgyz and Tajik villagers band together to destroy newly erected customs posts and to prevent state officials from imposing taxes and restricting local trade. As Reeves explains, "This was not an assertion of anger or rebellion, simply a statement of necessity" (241). Local villagers were unwilling to let state agents degrade local livelihoods.

As in any scholarly work, there are elements of the argument that will not please all readers. This is a rich ethnographic work and a snapshot of a

1 Despite the government tendency to suppress movement, populations remained both highly mobile and global. Reeves conducted a survey in 2005 that showed that as many as 78% of families in one part of Fergana had sent one or more family members to work in Russia (126).

particular period of time—the author's deepest fieldwork took place in 2004 and 2005 with more recent visits in 2008–2010. The book has tendency to over-sympathize with rural populations, and it can create the impression that state authorities and even locally embedded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and development officials are foolish, inexperienced, and gullible. In many ways this is more a reader's observation than a criticism; after all, the book is a work of ethnography whose broader message will allow it share the shelf alongside James C. Scott's highly popular *Seeing Like a State* (Cornell University Press, 1999) and Michael Herzfeld's underappreciated gem, *The Social Production of Indifference* (University of Chicago Press), a 1992 work that studies how people and bureaucrats in new states engage with, defy, and trans- form one another.

For readers who wish to see how state-society relationships play out over longer time periods in border regions, they can read Reeves alongside a number of other books. Rachel St. John's *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western us-Mexico Border* (Princeton University Press, 2012) shows how government officials and local communities—from Native Americans to ranchers to miners—contributed to the rise of state power and played a key role in how the state would come to manage the border. Sagi Schaefer's *States of Division: Border and Boundary Formation in Cold War Rural Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2015) examines how communities in the two Germanies coped with a new, evolving border. And a much-older classic by Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (University of California Press, 1989) is a sweeping historical account of rural communities along the French and Spanish border. In all three of these accounts, the authors document how rural communities defied and denied local state authority; at the same time, they note how communities developed a stake in building up state authority so the border would function according to their preferences. Overtime, cross-border relationships evolved and paradigms changed.

It is here where we come back to one of the main points that Reeves makes in *Border Work*—that Central Asian states have focused too much on enforcing a new separation and stasis, while rural populations demand cross-border mobility and movement. When might we see this paradigm shift? When and under what conditions might states, their local agents, and rural communities learn to balance or compromise their countervailing interests? This reader believes that there is hope for a balance in the future. Some international development programs in Central Asia (especially those working on border management) have long preached a mantra of "mobility, not closure" along Central Asia's borders. Lastly, if Central Asian officials are at all like the former Afghan minister of the interior—affable, realistic, and ready to make do with

all the local complexity he had inherited—we might wonder how long before the paradigm that Reeves describes in *Border Work* begins to change.

Border conflicts in the Fergana Valley – natural or not?

Paul Fryer, University of Eastern Finland

Central Asia continues to make the international news, most recently with reports that Islamic extremists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have participated in the violent conflicts in Syria and Iraq. This has contributed to a stereotype of the region as chaotic and unstable, ruled by autocratic regimes that are forever on the edge of collapse from corruption or extremism. Within the region, the densely populated Fergana Valley, a fertile territory shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, has been labeled a tinderbox on the verge of conflagration, an assumption supported in part by a series of bloody events including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan attacks and kidnappings (1999), the Andijan massacre (2005), ethnic riots in southern Kyrgyzstan (2010), and increasingly regular clashes between border guards along the Tajik-Kyrgyz frontier.

In this context, Madeleine Reeves' long-awaited book, *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia*, is a timely contribution to the literature on this often misunderstood region. Focusing on the southern Fergana borderlands divided between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, the author examines several manifestations of these ongoing conflicts and asks why they occur. Specifically, she focuses on the debate over the demarcation and delimitation of borders, a process that remains unfinished despite repeated attempts over the past decade by Central Asian governments. Reeves has spent the last 15 years working in this region and has published extensively on Fergana-related issues—her insider knowledge is evident from the beginning of the book and conveys a confidence that is both convincing and reassuring.

Reeves explores the border theme through a series of four Fergana-related vignettes, stories about local issues that highlight the challenges presented by the bordering process in the region. The reader is challenged initially by the narrative. For example, a description of Fergana apricot merchants offering their wares in the larger Russian cities, competing against compatriots from neighboring villages and adapting to life abroad (Chapter 3) does not immediately seem relevant in a book about "border work." Similarly, the biography of an ethnically mixed professional soldier from Kyrgyzstan who worked in the Russian army along the Tajik-Afghan border (Chapter 5) seems out of touch with the book's regional focus. Chapters on the frustrations associated with

newly established border posts (Chapter 4) and on border conflicts (Chapter 6) sit more easily within the expected Fergana narrative. This final story is the book's most gripping, and tells of a serious incident in which a group of Kyrgyz border guards beat two boys from the Uzbek enclave of Sokh for illegally pasturing their livestock across the border in Kyrgyzstan. Reeves paints a vivid picture of this incident's far-reaching repercussions for the inhabitants of this corner of Fergana and crucially challenges the accepted truth that this conflict, and others like it, was simply the result of competition for scarce resources (206). Instead, Reeves argues convincingly that the sense of contingency and the urgent spatialization program of the state authorities, which is directly linked to national discourses on the need to establish functioning border regimes, are themselves largely to blame for the conflicts arising in this peripheral border region.

In some ways many readers may at first be confused. Despite her previous publications and the book's title, this is not a simple story about life in the Fergana Valley. Although the lives of people in this contested borderland region are presented and the "sudden appearance of borders" dividing the three newly independent states—previously united by a single system and political order—is addressed from the perspective of the disruptions they cause in locals' lives, the focus is rather on the borders themselves and their relationship to political processes that are initiated outside the region. While agreeing that the specific nature of the existing political borders, with their unique and convoluted "chessboard pattern" of enclaves and exclaves that pay little heed to communities, infrastructure, and resources, exacerbate the perception of a "problem," in fact the author seeks to debunk one of the main myths that persists in much of the post-Soviet literature about the former Soviet republics; namely that Moscow purposely gerrymandered historical and ethnic borders in the 1920s as part of a deliberate policy to "divide and conquer" the nascent nations of the region. The author's thorough examination of historical documents and maps gives credence to this argument, placing today's border conflicts within a continuous process of bordering, de-bordering, and re-bordering involving local inhabitants throughout the twentieth century until the present. The historical evidence alongside Reeve's more recent empirical findings, supported by a well-developed and coherent theoretical argument, places this work into the broader border studies discussion that is as relevant to parts of developing countries in Africa and Asia as it is to the post-Soviet space.

Some readers may be disappointed by this work, as Central Asia is not the sole focus. It is clear that Reeves has chosen not to repackage simply her previous articles; these stand on their own, and readers may return to them at will.

Rather, Reeves' focus on borders separating states, their reification and development that at times confounds reason, is the main contribution. For the author, the southern Fergana region illustrates a contemporary bordering process that is by no means exceptional in the world (10). She suggests that we re-examine how borders and conflicts concerning borders are essentialized by various actors, including state authorities, media, international organizations, and, ultimately, locals themselves. Fundamentally, Reeves concurs with earlier writings by Wilson and Donnan2 that question the validity of borders, which are supposed to define the territorial integrity of any given state, when state- building is not yet complete (171). As Reeves reports, local populations on all sides of the southern Fergana borders maintain a conflicting discourse that, on the one hand, decries the inconvenience and injustice of the new political post-Soviet borders, almost uniformly insisting that "things were better before" they were enforced, while at the same time blaming their neighbors for cross- border transgressions and calling for their national governments to act in their defense. These real-life perceptions and experiences of borders by local populations reflect the ongoing state-building in the region, contributing to an atmosphere of unease and conflict.

This work makes an important contribution to the growing field of border studies. While Central Asian specialists may want an even deeper regional focus, scholars from anthropology, human geography, and political science, and policy-makers, international organization workers, and others engaged in border-related work and research will find this book essential reading, containing much to challenge our preconceptions of this important part of the post-Soviet world.

The Nature of Central Asian Borders
Emil Nasritdinov, American University of Central Asia

Madeleine Reeves' *Border Work* is a unique and powerful ethnography of Central Asian borders and statehood. This book is a result of more than ten years of the author's regular engagement with the field in a variety of roles: as a development worker, anthropologist, and sociologist. Her first encounter with the borders in the Fergana Valley was as a consultant for the Fergana Valley Development Program in 1999. She returned to start her ethnographic

2 Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan, "Nation, State, and Identity at International Borders," in Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (eds), *Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–30.

fieldwork in 2004–2005 and she has returned regularly ever since. During this period she was able to develop complex, long-term relations with her respondents, which affected her own role and position in the community she studied. Her research was not limited to Batken; Reeves followed some of her respondents in their journeys to Moscow. This allowed her to expand the geographical and conceptual limits of the border zone in the Fergana Valley and understand the wider, transnational economic and socio-cultural links of the region.

Reeves begins by advocating an interdisciplinary approach to studying borders, and her own research methods reflect that interdisciplinarity very well. She combines classical ethnographic methods of lengthy participant observation with sociological surveys of households, archival research, content analysis, and powerful visual ethnography. Stories, extracts from interviews, statistics, photographs, and analysis of news stories successfully complement each other in the book, richly illustrating the author's argument. Interestingly, what you don't see in the book is maps. While reading, I had to open Wikimapia. org several times to check the location of settlements described in the text. Perhaps, the author decided not to include maps of the border zones deliberately, since one of her main arguments is against the perception of the border as a linear formation. Using everything but maps, she demonstrates the com- plex nature of border condition.

Reeves is one of very few researchers on Central Asia (among both international and local scholars), whose writing is based on extensive and long-term fieldwork. She is fluent in Kyrgyz and Russian, and she is well familiar with the local ways of living and being. This allowed her to establish trustful relations with her respondents. *Border Work* resembles her other ethnographies of Central Asia. Unlike many scholarly accounts, hers are not theory-driven, but always grounded in extensive empirical foundations and deep first-hand knowledge of the subject, which give credibility to many of her conclusions.

However, her theoretical knowledge is extensive and productive, too. Quotes from other authors are organically woven into her discussion to form a complex and interesting discourse. Among the most frequently referenced authors is James Ferguson. Reeves effectively deploys his critique of modernization and development theories in the African context in her own critique of how borders in the Fergana Valley are perceived and treated by the respective states and international development organizations.

Such critiques are a part of what I perceive to be the main value of this book—Reeves's contestation of several scholarly and policy concepts and assumptions about the nature of Central Asian statehood, ethnicity, conflict, and, of course, borders. Throughout the book, she consistently challenges the

stereotypes, myths, policy imperatives, and theoretical perspectives on Central Asia, looking for "epistemic gaps" in which things "relate, but don't add up" (37). She destroys the reductionist perspective on the region, which have come to dominate Central Asian scholarship and policy frameworks. In my opinion, what motivates her in this pursuit is the understanding that these reductionist views can and already do have significant negative consequences for the people who live in the Fergana Valley. Readers will easily sense the strong emotional bonds Reeves established with many of her respondents, which gives an additional explanation as to why she is so passionate about the future of the region and about the need to properly understand its complexity.

Among the perceptions and ideas she challenges are following:

- *The Westphalian logic of a border as a line and a singular object.* Using a broad range of evidence, Reeves shows that borders in Fergana Valley are nonlinear: they are better understood as territories with regular gaps and limits and all kinds of intensive movements of people, goods, water, etc. Thinking about borders as lines disregards the historical complexity of the region and invites conflict-prevention imperatives that, in fact, only cause more conflicts. In Reeves's view, a border is a multiple object: it is not just about different perspectives on one border, it is about several different borders altogether. She pushes this argument to even suggest that border zones are not simply stages for the reenactment of activities, but that they are themselves inherently "lively."
- *The "Strong/weak state" perspective on Central Asia,* according to which states in the region are economically weak, yet politically authoritarian. Reeves criticizes this popular academic view for its assumption that the state must be separate from society. Using her ethnography, she shows how the state is enacted on the ground by a multitude of local actors competing with each other for influence and how the concept of "border authority" is constantly challenged and negotiated among these actors and representatives of local communities. She shows how the state is always "a work in progress."
- *Securitization of borders.* Reeves challenges the policy perspective that perceives borders as zones of potential conflicts and that proposes using force and deploying more military personnel as a solution. She illustrates how "more state" means more "petty sovereigns" and thus more corruption, resource extraction from the local population, and more potential for conflicts.
- *Delimitation as a panacea.* Finally, Reeves challenges the view that regards poorly delimited places, where ethnic distribution does not correlate with

state boundaries, as potentially dangerous. She traces the origin of border formations in the region to the early Soviet policies of nation-building and border delimitation through the territorialization of ethnicities. She offers evidence to show that these delimitations have always been problematic and sources of conflicts. Today, governments and development organizations perceive the delimitation and demarcation of borders as the only viable solution, but just like increased presence of state, delimitation, according to Reeves, only results in more conflict.

The main way for Reeves to challenge these reductionist views is by pushing to the limits the complexity of her own discourses. This is clearly reflected in the style of her writing; the book was not always easy to read for me, as a non- native English-language speaker. Yet, this was a productive complexity—one that does not de-motivate, but on the contrary keeps the reader interested and intrigued about how the discussion is going to evolve and expand.

The way the author structured the book and titled its chapters was very innovative: locations, delimitations, trajectories, gaps, impersonations, and separations are powerful spatial categories used to describe the complex processes taking place in the border.

To summarize, Madeleine Reeves' *Border Work* is highly recommended for all scholars of Central Asia. It provides us with new, powerful insights into the complexity of local conditions and it encourages a more complex approach to our own investigation and research endeavors. "Border Work" is also a great resource for scholars of borders. It engages deeply with existing literature and produces important, broad insights about the nature of borders.

The Anthropology of a Border Author's Response to Reviewers

I would like to thank Marlene Laruelle and Erica Marat for initiating this review "roundtable" for *Border Work* and to thank Paul Fryer, George Gavrilis, and Emil Nasritdinov for their thoughtful and generous engagements with my work. I am honored to have the opportunity to respond to their comments and criticisms here.

Although the book is informed by debates within anthropology concerning statehood, place, mobility, and the meaning of "border," it was always my hope that *Border Work* would be read by scholars beyond anthropology; not least because a distinctively ethnographic study of state-work at its institutional

and geographical limits can contribute to the denaturalizing of what (and where) we take the state to be. It is heartening to have engagements here from a geographer and a political scientist as well as an anthropologist. I hope that I do justice to their critiques.

In my response, I seek to address three substantive criticisms that I identify in commentaries of Fryer and Gavrilis: first, that a focus on mobility or the experiences of border guards does not necessarily tell us much about borders or bordering (Fryer); second, that the narrative tends to exaggerate locals' desire for mobility over their concern to have "secure" borders (Gavrilis); and third, that the narrative regards state authorities and outside actors in the region as "foolish, inexperienced, and gullible" (Gavrilis). In a final section, I respond to Nasritdinov's call for the book to have more close-up maps of the border. I take this comment as a provocation to think about the challenges of writing about (and visually representing) *un*demarcated or nonlinear borders: borders that are experienced as chessboards rather than lines; borders that may be disputed among states and their cartographic agencies.

Doing the Anthropology of a Border

In his commentary, Paul Fryer notes that the "reader is immediately challenged by the narrative" since an ethnographic focus on apricot traders from the Fergana Valley adapting to life abroad, or a Batken conscript soldier serving in the Russian army along the Tajik-Afghan border would seem unusual entry points for an analysis of Central Asian border work. If this diversity of ethno- graphic entry points represents a challenge, it is perhaps because our narratives of "border" so often take the location of a border, what it is and what it separates, for granted.3

My aim here was rather different. As Nasritdinov notes in his commentary, by expanding the geographical and conceptual limits of inquiry we can pose as an empirical question how and when a "border" as such is felt to materialize; how and when it emerges in daily life as an obstacle, a resource, as something to be overcome or as something to be passionately defended. This approach is informed by a methodological commitment to allow the ethnography to guide my theory (in this respect, I believe, following Ingold, that "ethnography," when it is reduced simply to "qualitative research," misses what is distinctive about participant observation as a mode of inquiry, which is precisely to allow our

3 Sarah Green, "A Sense of Border," in Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (eds), *A Companionto Border Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 573–592.

research to be led by our informants).4 For the people with whom I was living and working, trade, labor migration, and military service were some of the key sites where "border" was encountered. So were lifecycle celebrations, funerals, travel for healthcare, and movement to summer pastures; these particular kinds of movement inform the narrative of the book. My attentiveness to *these* practices (rather than, say, the practices of boundary commission members, OSCE delimitation experts, or border chiefs) stems from a concern to reinsert histories of mobility and vernacular cosmopolitanism—and more concretely, to attend to histories of trade, of "Moscow provisioning," of multilingualism— into accounts of the Fergana Valley that have tended to be overdetermined by accounts of (intractable, conflict-inducing) difference.

Beyond these methodological and thematic concerns, my approach is informed by a commitment to foreground border *work* (as process) over border as ontological given. Many studies of borders and borderland lives, I argue, take the nature of a border itself for granted: its materiality, its geographical determinacy, and so forth, and then proceed to ask: how does the border affect aspect X or Y of borderland dwellers' lives? In so doing, I believe, we often take the politically fraught, institutionally complex, and socially contentious business of producing state space *as such* for granted (and thus, in effect, contribute to reifying the state in our own analysis). In several of the ethnographic examples in the book, it is this work of producing territorial integrity that I am interested in exploring; thus, what does it mean to be a conscript soldier, working for a state that is not one where you enjoy citizenship, patrolling the "integrity" of an international border with which you have few affective or material connections, even as you are dependent upon the goodwill of local border dwellers to keep body and soul together? If we think about border *this way,* I suggest, through the contested work of rendering territory integral, the fiction of the border as always/already a line, always/ already marking spaces of sovereign control, comes into view. If this is challenging, it is deliberately so, as I try to articulate in the book's conclusion: the Fergana Valley may be an "exceptional" example of territorial indeterminacy, but only in the sense that it reveals with particular clarity the work entailed in naturalizing state spatiality that may be more concealed elsewhere.

Movement, Statis, and the Desire for an Integral State

A second critique, articulated by Gavrilis in his review, concerns the book's tendency to highlight border dwellers' desires for mobility and connection

4 Timothy Ingold, "That's Enough About Ethnography," *hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 4, no. 1 (2014): 383–395.

rather than their (potentially equally strong) concerns for security and territorial integrity. If this is the impression that the narrative gives, then the fault perhaps lies with the exposition of my argument. Certainly, I sought to high- light the frustration, anger, and indignation that is often experienced by border dwellers as they encounter obstacles to habitual mobility: the hurt narrated by Firuza regarding the inability to conduct a proper burial for the dead, for instance; or Mukhtar's sense of bewilderment that pedestrian and motor-vehicle bridges across the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan border at Kara-Suu were being dismantled at the very moment that new bridges between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan were being opened. Nostalgia for an era of comparatively unhindered mobility within the Soviet Union; of inter-ethnic conviviality; of recognition as fellow-citizens when one travelled beyond the valley to Tashkent or Moscow is a recurring local sentiment, particularly (though not exclusively) among older interlocutors; and I wanted to do justice to that.

However, I have also sought to demonstrate a more complex repertoire of responses and orientations. This isn't *just* a story of border dwellers acting "against" or resisting the state. In that sense, although Gavrilis notes that the book would sit on a shelf with Scott's *Seeing Like a State,* Scott's is a text with which my work lies is in critical conversation precisely for its tendency to over- play that difference between "state" and "nonstate" perspectives (an argument that I elaborate in Chapter 5). There are two points that I develop in the book in this respect. First, I argue that new obstacles to mobility can serve as a resource for some, just as they can hinder the mobility of others. This is the case, for instance, with Mohammed in Chapter 4, whose trans-boundary trade thrives upon the material and institutional gaps in the border, the possibilities for establishing friendly relations with local conscript soldiers, as well as the different economic models introduced on the Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistansides of the border, respectively.

Second, I demonstrate the intense social resonance of official (state-led) discourses concerning the dangerous porosity of undemarcated borders. In Chapter 6, I trace locally initiated attempts to separate a once trans-boundary market along the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan border at the southern end of the Sokh enclave in response to a moment of heightened local and national tension. I show the affective investment that attached to the so-called Akaev Road as a material demonstration of independence. Indeed I argue in Chapter 6 that such moments pose a conceptual as much as an ethnographic challenge to analytic models framed in terms of power and resistance. The challenge, I note there, is "to think about the state not just as a terrifying externality but as the locus of intense emotional investment, as a site or enactment or performance, as the source of legitimation, and as an object of hope" (238). And at the very end of

the book I suggest that the challenge for an anthropological understanding of the state in Central Asia is to take *both* of these locally salient registers seriously: the desire for uninhibited mobility, on the one hand, and the urge to have determinate borders as a condition of "normal" statehood, on the other (249).

Misguided and Gullible State Officials?

The third significant critique that I address here, which Gavrilis raises in his review, concerns my portrayal of state officials and nongovernmental organizations acting in the region. Certainly, I would refrain from the value judgment that is imputed to me of treating such actors as foolish or gullible. My portrayal of Parviz, for instance, a Sokh-based conflict analyst, seeks to show the material and existential difficulties of working for a nongovernmental organization in a political environment—mid-2000s Uzbekistan—that was structurally suspicious toward any kind of autonomous or non-state-sanctioned activity, how- ever well-intentioned and apolitical its activities. However, as my quotes from state and nongovernmental actors both suggest, there was a degree of local cynicism about the efficacy of many initiatives that came to be presented to donor agencies in the language of "conflict prevention," either because they came to formalize (and attach financial incentives to) practices of trans- boundary cooperation that would have been undertaken anyway; or because they tended to treat ethnic and linguistic difference as a proxy for conflict potential, while ignoring the profoundly destabilizing consequences of authoritarian political rule for borderland populations. If my language here is rather critical, it is because many of my informants—whether they were employed by local NGOs or large donor agencies—were often themselves extremely skeptical of the modes of representation and accountability that were required of them. This is a theme that I have explored in more depth in a subsequent publication specifically exploring the complexities of "preventive" development in the Fergana Valley.5 As for high-level state officials, my ethnography—pitched as it was in the border region—did not give me privileged access to their views. What is clear from my ethnography, however, is that local residents often put much greater faith in the role of local strong-man patrons, such as Kyrgyz legislator Bayaman Erkinbaev, to respond to their demands and concerns than to the formal government agencies located in district and national centers.

5 Madeleine Reeves, "Politics, Cosmopolitics, and Preventive Development at the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Border," in Nina Glick Schiller and Andrew Irving (eds), *Whose Cosmopolitanism: Critical Perspectives, Relationalities, and Discontents* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 201–217.

Maps, Photographs, and the Non-Delimited Border

Emil Nasritdinov's generous review raises an interesting point of critique concerning the use (or lack) of maps of the border in the text. There are, in fact, two maps of the region in the book, on pages 2 and 17, but it is true that neither is a close-up drawing of the border at the village level. Part of the reason here has to do with the empirical indeterminacy over which map is "correct," particularly as concerned the location of the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan boundary in the Isfara Valley. Maps published in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan tend to based on different Soviet-era maps from different periods and thus give different locations for several stretches of border around Tojikon, Khodjai-A'lo, Ak-Sai and Kök-Tash villages. A quick glance at Google maps' representation of the Isfara Valley will show how even this version of the borders' location is at variance with where the border is understood to be by those "on the ground" (the village of Tojikon, for instance, is shown as being located on the Kyrgyzstan side of the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan boundary). My aim in the book was less to pronounce on which version of these maps is "correct" than to show the historical reasons for their variance and the implications of this for people who have to negotiate the ambiguous presence of the state in such sites.

But if there is a pragmatic reason for avoiding giving a detailed drawing of the map at a village-based level of granularity, it is also because I am precisely interested in encouraging readers to think about how we might conceive of border *without* the map. This, after all, is what most village residents have to do most of the time. Just as "the state" is not encountered in the tidy organograms of hierarchically organized authorities that figure on the walls of ministries and government agencies, so "the border" is typically encountered in stretches of dense regulation interspersed with zones of indeterminacy: as chessboard (as it is frequently referred to here) rather than as line. My broader point here is that maps do powerful work in forging our imagination of state spatiality. But they are also powerful *fictions* of a sort: implying that space and sovereignty are unambiguous attributes of the state; attributes that begin and end at the geographical border. This may be true in one (very limited) sense, but as recent work in political anthropology has amply demonstrated, there are many respects in which sovereignty is dispersed, variegated, hijacked—and that it cannot be properly considered coextensive with the geographical reach of "the state." By trying to render "border" ethnographically rather than cartographically, it is precisely this experiential indeterminacy that I have sought to convey.