

## **A Bridged Air: Imagining Empire and War through Air Routes**

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### **Abstract**

When two commercial planes with passengers and hijackers on-board hit the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, it redefined the nomos of the earth and simultaneously produced an antipodean subject of that nomos. If the partisan was the subject of firm earth, the pirate the subject of the free sea then those who crashed the plane should be seen as the proper subject of the sovereign air. It required new conventions to define this subject as the older forms became redundant or inadequate and, more importantly, ambiguous to the concept of *justa causa*, *hostis*, and *inimicus*. It also meant that a new paradigm be created to understand the sky and unearth the archives of zones and bridges which previously connected sovereign states.

The subject of 9/11 threatened and breached the sovereign air carefully carved among the states based on land and sea forcing the states look anew at their status as a sovereign. The act of these subjects reconfigured the meaning of sovereignty; air, land, and sea. The drone is the symbol of that attempt by the states to re-determine their sovereignty. Thus, the drone and the hijacker define the contemporary nomos of the earth.

The emergence of this nomos and the subject has come about as a result of developments over almost a century. This involves the development of air routes, new forms of representation of the sky as well as earth, overriding segregation of land by continuities and ruptures of the sky, and military strategies and war.

This paper investigates the evolution of sovereignty and the political through a study of air routes over India in the colonial period, the postcolonial period, and contemporary times. In this sense, the paper will come up with a theory of the transmutations of the bridges and zones of the air.