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Borderlands

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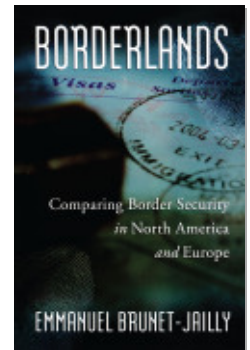
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CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION:

BORDERS, BORDERLANDS, AND SECURITY: EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN LESSONS AND PUBLIC POLICY SUGGESTIONS

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly

Originally the editor and the authors of this book had three themes in mind: first, to discuss the relative importance of human agency on borders; second, to examine the porosity of borders; and third, to suggest new policy guidelines to governments and security agencies that might strengthen border security objectives. The overall finding presented collectively by the contributors to this book is that the human agency exercised in borderlands establishes the complex environment with which border security policies must struggle.

Borders are porous due to such critical factors as market forces, flows of trade, and the movements of people, as shaped by the local culture and the local political clout of borderland communities. Contrary to some well-known views (see Biger 1995), no border or borderland in Europe or North America is unique. Borders and borderlands display different features, but these result from the common dynamics of the interplay between collective decisions to establish border policies and individual decisions to comply, or not to comply, with the intent of those policies. While governments pursue institutional arrangements to establish and recognize formal borders, and then regulate flows and other activities across them, individuals consider their own interests in determining whether or not to act in accordance with the intent of such regulations. Their decisions reflect the strength of the incentives leading to market transactions and trade flows, as well as to movements of people, capital, and currencies. Moreover, their decisions reflect the political clout of borderland communities affected by such flows and the social ties that bind individuals within the many cultures of those communities. In

turn these myriad individual decisions generate, in aggregate, forces that restructure border policies and institutions. It is the interaction of these forces, rather than the particularities of geography, that makes the comparative study of borders—or, more accurately, borderlands—worthwhile, not just from an academic perspective but also from a public-policy perspective.

Thus border policies and borderland security are highly dependent on the clear identification of the specific traits of agent power exercised within each borderland in question. The first and central policy implication is that border security cannot be achieved by pursuing uniform and inflexible policies that are established centrally.

Border security policies are generally unsuccessful because the very nature of borders, as artificial barriers to the achievement of the goals of individual human beings, is to be porous (Andreas 2000; Andreas and Biersteker 2003; Andreas and Snyder 2000). Typically, security agencies and central government departments underestimate the influence of specific borderland characteristics because they have only partial or limited understanding of borderlands. For instance, they may substantially misread or misinterpret the relative influence of market flows or the cross-border pulls of the local culture and the political clout of local borderland organizations pursuing objectives particular to the region. Finally, and most important, these centralized organizations may have a unilateral view of the borderland that leads them to overlook government activities on the other side. A mismatch between security policies on either side of the border also contributes to greater unregulated flows and increased porosity.

This governmental top-down approach to developing and implementing border policies thus leads to ineffective border security policies. Designing and implementing effective border security policies necessitate factoring in local economic, cultural, and political elements. In their attempts to filter out dangerous individuals and substances, policy-makers must recognize that their activities are competing not only with increasingly strong market forces, which lead to growing market-driven flows of goods and people across borders, but also with the evolving ties of people that are shaped by the local culture of each borderland region and the political clout of local organizations within it. They also need a deeper understanding of the multiple policies and activities of other government levels and agencies that are implemented locally on both sides of the border.

This book's concrete public policy contribution is to illustrate these general findings by providing a critical and comparative perspective for the implementation of security policies in several borderland regions. The contributors to this book found that market forces, local culture, and the local political clout of urban cross-border regions were empirically important in the cases they examined. These factors offered powerful analytical dimensions for understanding how individual agency may be exercised in the presence of borders, to differentiate such agency from formal structure and to identify the real and multiple challenges faced by border security policy-makers.

As for the structuring effect of the multiple activities of governments, Clochard, Smith, Ramos, and Patrick each suggest that cooperation across borders is central. They also suggest that, without such cooperation, governments' border and borderland security policies will struggle to make an impact, and indeed may be ineffective in the face of strong human forces militating against compliance with restrictive regulations that may limit their potential opportunities across the boundary line. Ferrer suggests that the relative structuring effect of a security policy may be amended by specific local needs, while Patrick argues that the structuring effect of the US border security policy depends not only on the strength of individuals' interest in cross-border interactions but also on cross-border government cooperation. Finally, Daniel Villafuerte Solís notes that the Mexican state has been unable to effectively resist the local political clout and cross-continental market forces that structure the Guatemalan borderland.

As for the impact of local culture and local political clout, Murphy Erfani argues that these two factors have blocked the realization of a "smart border" security policy, despite strong integrating local market forces and important government investments. Melissa Gauthier demonstrates how the illicit trade in used clothing that is grounded in the local economic fabric of the border regions of El Paso (Texas, United States) and Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua, Mexico) seems to have remained undisturbed by increased border security. In the same vein van der Velde and Marcińczak find that, despite the implementation of the Schengen Agreement, local economic agents have adapted successfully in the Łódź region. Payan and Vasquez point out how local culture, local political clout, and market forces have been engaged in a structuring tug of war with the policy activities of the central state, while Heininen and Nicol suggest that borderland cultures and political clout

are increasingly central to understanding Arctic borderlands, as well as becoming increasingly entrenched in more extensive circumpolar structures and institutions.

In effect the contributors to this book have argued that four kinds of local conditions influence the security of borders and borderlands: market forces, the diverse and multiple activities of governments, local political clout, and local culture. Each provides an important analytical lens for security policy and each has significant theoretical implications for security policy.

The first and primary characteristic of borders and borderlands noted in this book is that they cannot be reduced to any one specific structure or feature of human agency. Borders and borderlands are defined by the historically and geographically variable expression of agent power exercised within institutional structures of varying force and influence. It is the interplay and interdependence between individual incentives to action and the surrounding structures, understood as those processes constructed socially to contain and constrain individual action, that determine the effectiveness of formal borders within a borderland region. It is the human agency behind the multiple activities of governments, market forces, the culture of borderlands, and the political clout of borderland communities that is critical to understanding and characterizing the porosity of any one border or borderland region. In turn this agency is fundamental to border and borderland security.

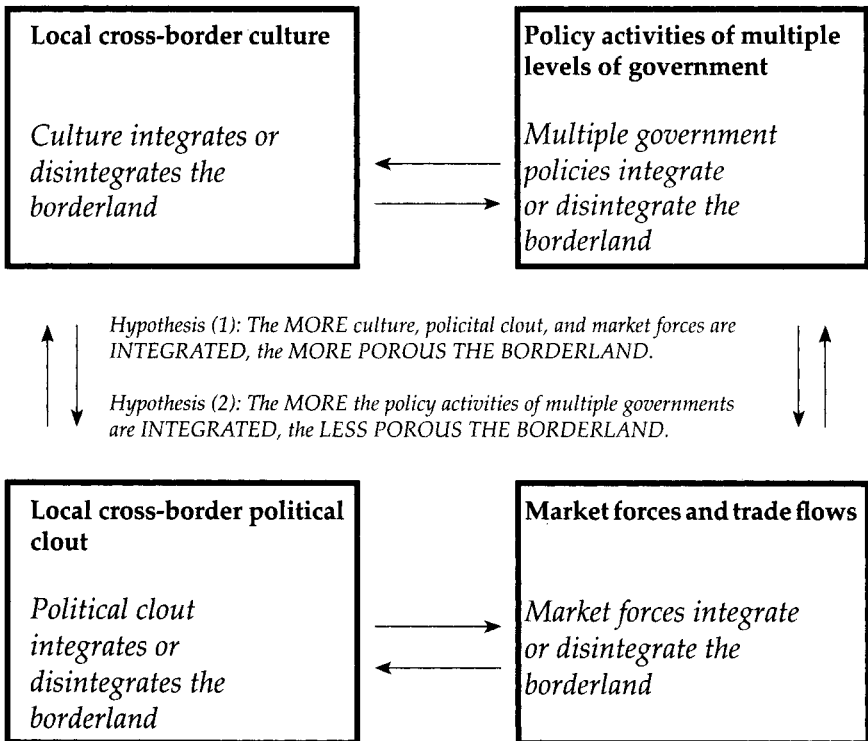
Each chapter in this book is a powerful vignette of the individual human determinants of the nature of life in individual borderlands. It is apparent from the review of the literature and the findings discussed in this book that borders and borderlands are human creations, and that their formal manifestations result from life as it is lived through market activities, flows of trade, and the local and regional cultures and political clout of borderlands.

In most cases borders result from complex processes of state formation, which have emerged from the complex interaction of multiple governments. Yet Ramos, Smith, Murphy Erfani, and Ferrer remind us that border policies also struggle with the integrative force of human ties in borderland communities, which, it seems, limits the impact of government policies in forming and imposing formal borders on living borderlands. Evidently, central government policy-makers have so far failed to sufficiently factor in an adequate assessment of the relative level of integration of the borderlands examined in this volume.

As underscored by nearly all the contributors, the second primary characteristic of borders and borderlands is that they are highly permeable. Although borders and borderlands are lines of demarcation, they are also highly porous, due to local culture, local political clout, market forces and trade flows. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century scholars had identified borders as permeable, some even arguing that when natural borders were poorly settled they were “good,” while more urbanized borderland regions were “bad” (Holdich 1916; Lyde 1915).

In the end what emerge are two analytical dimensions of local culture: local political clout, market forces and trade flows; and their polar opposite, multiple government activities taking place across the borderlands. When culture, political clout, and market forces and trade flows straddle the border they integrate the borderland. Similarly,

Figure 12.1: MODEL OF BORDERLAND SECURITY



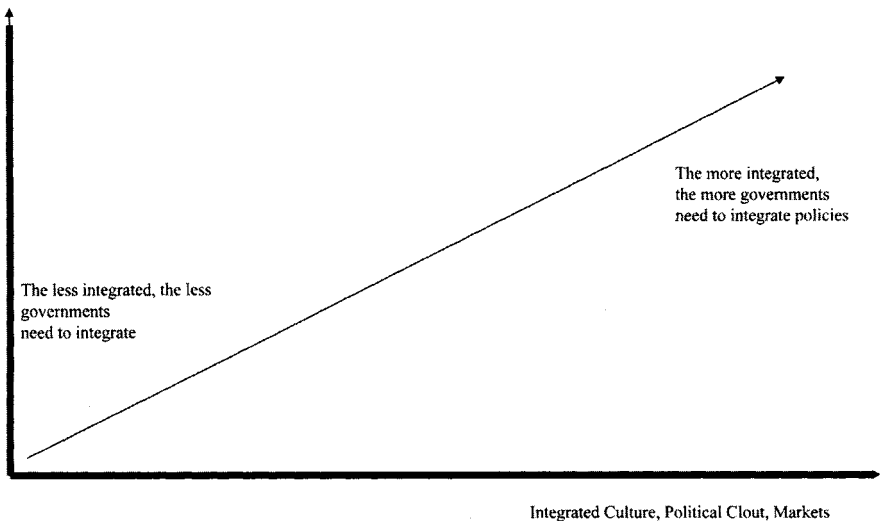
when multiple government policies straddle the border they integrate borderland security. However, as the authors of this book have explained in detail, in most cases these four factors are not generally understood as polar opposites that compete with each other to either integrate or disintegrate the borderland.

As Payan and Vásquez or Villafuerte have demonstrated, the more culture, political clout, and market forces integrate the borderland, the more porous the border. In contrast, as both Ramos and Smith have suggested, the more integrated the policy activities of multiple governments, the more secure and the less porous the borderland.

The result of these two opposing dimensions is a policy challenge and a border security dilemma. On the one hand, the less integrated the borderland, due to weak culture, political clout, and market forces, the less need there is for governments to integrate policies in order to implement border-straddling security. On the other hand, the more integrated the borderland, due to similar culture, strong local cross-border political clout, and strong market forces, the more need there is for governments to integrate their border-straddling policies to secure the border and the borderland, even going against the natural tendencies of the region. These points can be summed up this way:

Figure 12.2: Controlling for Porous Borderlands: The Border Security Dilemma

Integrated Policy Activities of Multiple Governments



(1) the more culture, political clout, and market forces are integrated with any given scale of government intervention, the more porous the border; and (2) in any given region the more integrated the security policy activities of multiple governments, the less porous the border in matters of security.

The implications of this policy statement are important and profound. The less integrated the borderland, the less government activities straddling the border need to be integrated. Conversely, the more integrated the borderland, the more governments need to integrate border-straddling security policies. From this model it may be concluded that an integrating borderland region has an integrating culture, integrating local political clout, and an integrating regional economy, and thus governments must work at integrating a multitude of government activities to enforce security.

In the introduction to this book it was noted that the study of borders and borderlands needs more than the partial explanations currently available to explain the porosity of borders. All those who have contributed to this book have helped to close this gap in the literature and have provided government policy-makers with critically important information on the porosity of borders and borderlands.

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