
Book Review: *World of Walls*

World of Walls: The Structure, Roles and Effectiveness of Separation Barriers, edited by Said Saddiki. Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, 2017. 152 pp., £26.95 (hbk) ISBN 978-1-78374-369-8, £14.95 (pbk), ISBN 978-1-78374-368-1, free Digital (PDF) ISBN 978-1-78374-370-4. Reviewed by Ahmed El Morabety, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco. Email: aelmorabety@gmail.com

World of Walls: The Structure, Roles and Effectiveness of Separation Barriers, edited by Said Saddiki, explores one of the major paradoxical aspects of the globalization phenomenon. This paradox reveals that an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world is simultaneously marked by intensified securitization and militarization of national borders. Since border studies is an interdisciplinary field of knowledge, Saddiki bases his academic research on different approaches to deal with boundary fencing policies all over the world, in general, and in five case studies, in particular, namely: the fencing policy of Israel; border fencing in India; the fences of Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco; the US–Mexico border policy; and, finally, the Western Sahara Wall in southern Morocco. Accordingly, the author uses a set of integrated, historical, geopolitical and functional approaches, but also other concepts and modern paradigms developed in the field of contemporary border studies.

The book aims to measure the effectiveness of border control policies to prevent, or at least reduce, transnational security threats, especially irregular migration, weapons smuggling, drug trafficking, and other illegal cross-border activities. Security concerns remain a major determinant of such border walls policies.

Being highly conscious of growing global interdependency, the author emphasizes that the classical Westphalian system of nation-states has been dramatically affected by the internationalization of economies, rapid growth of transborder flows, as well as the unprecedented increase of the activities of

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non-state actors. Shedding a light on this shift that has occurred in the post-Cold War era, he reveals how such physical-border barriers contradict, to a great extent, the trend of globalist and transnational perspectives that envisage a “Borderless World,” a “World without Sovereignty,” “The End of Geography,” and so on.

The introduction presents an overview of the origin of border walls throughout history, stating that these such walls were viewed by ancient nations from a defensive perspective, as a fortification to defend their territorial sovereignty and protect themselves from external attacks, and concludes that the functions of international borders have changed substantially due to the ever-changing nature of the international environment.

This book is comprised of five chapters. The first is devoted to Israel’s fencing policy. This chapter analyzes multiple aspects of Israel’s strategy of separation, and evaluates the effectiveness of its contemporary methods so as to determine the extent to which such a policy makes the country and its citizens more safe and secure. The author notes that Israeli policy has been a constant element of the country’s security doctrine since 1948. Dealing with military barriers in the occupied Palestinian territories, he states that those that separate Palestinians from each other—mainly the West Bank wall—are the most painful, since they affect vital aspects of Palestinian lives, especially for those who live in areas adjacent to the barriers. To most Israelis, the West Bank Wall is considered a security measure protecting their country from attacks by Palestinian militant groups, whereas Palestinians consider it as a form of apartheid. The majority of the world community, and the United Nations itself, recognized that the construction of this wall violates Israel’s obligations under international law and should be dismantled. In this respect, the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, issued on 9 July 2004, rejected Israel’s security argument, since the route of the wall and its associated regime gravely infringe on a number of rights of Palestinians residing in the territory occupied by Israel, and the infringements resulting from that route cannot be justified by military needs or by the requirements of the national security or public order.¹ All in all, the fencing and heavy militarization of Israel’s boundaries and the creation of security and buffer zones with Arab nations, whether in the West Bank, Gaza, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, or Jordan,

1. Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” para. 137. <http://www.unrod.org/docs/ICJ-Advisory2004.pdf>

are intended to protect and perpetuate its occupation, illegal colonies, and ongoing colonization of Palestinian lands. However, Israel has not achieved security despite the enormous efforts and huge amounts of money spent on constructing and fortifying these separation barriers.

The second chapter deals with the Indian strategy of fencing borders with some of its neighboring countries and attempts to measure its effectiveness with respect to the desired goals. Discussing the complex situation of India's borderlines, the author states that history, culture, and religion have played a significant role in defining India's borderlines, pointing out that the border between India and Pakistan is the most sensitive of India's borders, not only because of the dispute over Kashmir but also because both these countries possess nuclear weapons. Analyzing the country's strategy of fencing boundaries, the authors notes that despite a diversity of goals targeted by the Indian border policy, security concerns are the top priority for its Indian border systems. Yet, the latter has also political reasons closely related to the way in which these international borders were drawn. Nevertheless, the strategy of fencing borders and all related measures have, similar to the previously examined case, largely failed to achieve the designated objectives.

The third chapter is concerned with the fences of Ceuta and Melilla. These two Spanish enclaves lie within Morocco in North Africa and consider the fences around them as a part of a comprehensive strategy that has several forms and steps aimed at perpetuating the status quo. Granting autonomous status, passing immigration laws and organizing visits by the king and ministers are the key elements of this strategy. Regarding the roles of these fences in preventing irregular immigration, the author strictly criticizes such a boundary fencing policy, considering it as an impractical solution to stop the number of irregular immigrants crossing into Spain through the towns. He suggests, instead, providing support and aid so as to reduce the economic and social crisis in developing immigrant-sending countries which have been one of the main causes of both regular and irregular migration.

The fourth chapter is directed at the United States and Mexico. At the outset, it sheds a light on the regulation of immigration to the United States that dates to the end of the eighteenth century, specifically to 1798, the year in which three important Acts concerning the status of aliens in the United States (the Naturalization Acts, the Alien Friends Act, and the Alien Enemies Act) were adopted. This chapter examines how this regulation passed from the "Open Border" policy to anti-immigration legislation, especially after 9/11 which led the United States to take several legislative measures in order

to tighten security control on the country's borders with Mexico and Canada. Finally, Saddiki points out that the current US President, Donald Trump, has adopted from the very beginning of his presidency mandate many bills concerning illegal immigrants, including deportation, security border control and banning entry from majority-Muslim countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, along with many African ones. A border wall to fight illegal immigration was, in fact, one of Trump's key election campaign promises.

Finally, the last chapter highlights the Western Sahara Wall, which was built in the 1980s in a specific international and regional context marked by the heated competition between the two superpowers during the Cold War over the control of some geostrategic areas, including the Maghreb. This wall was initially built for defensive purposes, a fact clearly recognized in the Secretary-General's Report S/10/1998 of 10 July 1998.² Currently, this wall has assumed new roles, namely, reducing transnational threats as well as preventing the movement of irregular immigrants. According to the author, there are three potential scenarios for the future of the Sahara Wall in accordance with the positions held by the conflicting parties. They include: the separation of the Western Sahara region from Morocco; the success of the Moroccan Autonomy Initiative; or the continuation of the existing status quo. In other words, the future of the Sahara Wall, also known as a sand wall, is closely related to the issue of the Sahara itself, since the latter is just an aspect of a complex and latent conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

World of Walls is published by OpenBook Publishers in the United Kingdom, which makes decisions to publish through a rigorous peer-review process based on reports of at least two experts in the field. The book does not claim to give an exhaustive overview of border fencing policies in the regions studied above, yet it paves the way for further research in the field of border walls/fences studies, knowing that this subject has recently become the focus of attention of scholars from different disciplines, especially in North America and Europe, and has been the subject of an important number of scientific conferences and events.

The book examines the physical and virtual walls in five distinct territories across the globe, and it does so with careful detail and analytical precision. It provides a wealth of useful information and also includes important

2. Secretary-General's Report S/1998, 10 July 1998, para. 9 of Section B entitled "Military aspects." http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/1998/634.

recommendations. The book is significant in terms of its contribution to the existing body of research knowledge concerning this study area. Its main contribution is reflected in evaluating the effectiveness of such separation barriers and its capability to achieve the desired security objectives, namely, preventing and deterring all types of illegal border crossings.