

Philippe M. Frowd, *Security at the Borders: Transnational Practices and Technologies in West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018

In *Security at the Borders: Transnational Practices and Technologies in West Africa*, Philippe M. Frowd addresses the current state of security practices in Mauritania and Senegal, and more specifically, what these practices reveal about states and the people they govern. While similar inquiries about European and North American states were made previous to Frowd's research, he endeavors to analyze the security practices unique to West African culture and how border security as a construct exists as more than a figurative line that patrols who enters a particular state and who does not. Rather, he analyzes the ways in which these practices relate to: (1) practices of inclusion and exclusion; (2) linkages between international state actors; and (3) authority and the ways West African states assert their authority through security politics. While Frowd surely intends for this book to reach an academic audience, he advances his concepts in a way that appeals to the "everyday register," or at least he attempts to. At various moments, he advances sets of different arguments, and sacrifices clarity in the process. Nevertheless, he does manage to represent the complex nature of security practices and technologies and paints a very nuanced picture of what life at the border looks like in Mauritania and Senegal.

Frowd begins Part I by introducing a new term, "borderwork," and explains more broadly how borders function as more than mere geographical lines. Instead, he insists that borders are "complex, networked spaces in that their governance and effects are enacted and often felt far from the site of territorial demarcation" (25). Within the context of West African borders, Frowd illustrates how borders and border security exist as conduits that promote territorial awareness and also reflect the growing complexity of border infrastructure. He develops this by arguing that borderwork is a social construct and that legal, diplomatic and political concerns all shape the way borders function. More simply, he intends for this to mean that "borderwork" is an inclusive form of action and that issues relating citizenship, airport security, drug searches and up-to-date paper documents all contribute to the analysis of borders. In order to understand the full scope of "borderwork," it is important to first understand who makes borders. Specifically within the context of West Africa, he asserts that it is an "interlinked nature of efforts" by the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations (UN) and several other state and international actors. He does not limit the scope of these actors to "professionals" or "human-actors" but instead suggests that other actors—such as ordinary citizens and surveillance technologies—contribute equally to borderwork and border security. He provides a specific example of the Touche Pas a Ma Nationalite tribe in Mauritania which challenged the Mauritanian government and protested the exclusion of their people, an example of how different actors make and define borders—professional or not—and "shape the meaning and infrastructure of the border itself" (48).

Frowd provides a detailed analysis of "borderwork" and its different forms in Part I; however, he tends to speak in the abstract instead of providing specific examples. The example I included about the Touche Pas a Ma Nationalite tribe was the lone example he used to illustrate what "borderwork" looked like in West Africa. I found myself wanting to know more about the borderwork practices unique to that region, and instead felt that he had made umbrella arguments without providing real first-hand accounts or examples. I also feel that he provided a lot of superfluous information that may in fact have distracted readers from his main point—that several actors from across different spectrums contribute to this theory of "borderwork" and that they work together to bring order to states. This criticism may be unfair to Frowd since it is more of an

indictment on academic-themed writing, but I believe that his argument would have been able to reach a broader audience if he would have been more direct and concise in his approach.

While Part I answered *who* makes borders, Part II focuses on the efforts that contribute to building and maintaining them. Frowd attempts to humanize border practices by commenting on the people and specific cultures that shape borders. Consistent with the collaborative approach he introduced in Chapter 1, he also asserts that building and maintaining a border requires professional and networked actions. As it relates to West African states, he believes that “[they] are shaped by assemblages of intervention in the area of border control” and that they contribute to the ultimate goal of state building. He opens this chapter by asserting that knowledge is fundamental to achieving border security and that this can be achieved through personal histories or exemplars. He defines border security as anything relating to policing, migration, surveillance or technologies, and further explains that these apparatuses can all be strengthened through emulating other thriving states and adopting their security norms. He provides anecdotal accounts of the Senegalese and Mauritanian governments which learned how to control their borders through “institutional and personal histories” and through global standards, respectively (53). There are limits to this approach, however, and he adds that different states adopt different practices depending on cultural elements, strength in security and professional interactions. States experience different levels of fear and threats to their borders, and these anxieties inform which rules and practices they adopt, and how they enforce them. He suggests that knowledge is something to be shared both on a local and global stage, and references how European and West African states exchange knowledge about technological solutions to border control and interconnected databases. To him, this typifies how knowledge moves between global spaces and how states should emulate other successful states. He again provides a specific example of the African Capacity Building Centre (ACBC) in Tanzania, and how states model their migration management systems after the West African organization.

Frowd provides more examples in Chapter 2 that reflect specific security practices in West Africa, referring again to Senegal and Mauritania, suggesting that both states emulate the security practices of Spanish embassies as it relates to border control: “Bringing together diverse actors around particular policy problems is also effective, as has been the case in Mauritania where organizations such as the IOM and UNHCR perform a key role in the north-south transfer of cognitive categories and frameworks’ about migration in Mauritania” (72). The examples allow readers to contextualize what life at certain West African borders look like, and further, how global actors interact. To this end, Frowd believes that states should adopt “mutable” and broad practices to overcome language and cultural barriers so that states can be “closer to the recipients of [information]” (p. 73). This gives rise to his other belief, that state interplay can lead to border security interventions which can in turn change behavior and “reshape the trajectory of future developments in border security.” He provides another example of the West African Police Information System (WAPIS) which worked with the European Union (EU) and Interpol to formalize a system that exchanges information between African states’ police and intelligence officials.

Part III focuses on the cooperation between states when responding to different threats at the border, including terrorist infiltration and drug trafficking. Frowd maintains that states must work together to jointly patrol borders, and that “the various objects, concepts and actors who compose this border scape” must respond to growing security concerns. He provides a multifarious analysis of the elements that contribute to new and rising anxieties in West Africa, and how other states and actors have cooperated with West African states to respond to new threats; and vice versa. He references the crisis of migration to the Canary Islands where over 31,000 immigrants

migrated to the Spanish Island and how Senegal and Mauritania cooperated with Spain to jointly patrol the coasts. These types of joint efforts reflect the “assembling of expertise” that he believes states should employ to solve and address common border issues (100). He uses a specific example of the growing network between Spain and West African states when he references the fact that “Spain now has liaison officers in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Niger” (101). He also believes that cooperation between states promotes the exchange of practical knowledge and encourages innovation. He cites the evolution of vehicles as security technologies as proof of this innovation; more specifically, he provides a commentary on the advancements to 4x4 patrol vehicles that patrol the in-land border, large commercial vessels that control the maritime border, and jets that patrol the above-air border. He again emphasizes the importance of collaboration when he comments on the advancements to surveillance technologies, specifically referencing the Seahorse Project—an information-sharing system—between the EU and several West African states, and how it facilitated the communication of surveillance information in countries like Senegal, Mauritania and Cape Verde.

Frowd succeeds in providing first-accounts instead of relying on broad themes in Part III. This approach allows readers to contextualize what joint cooperation between state actors looks like; and further, it allows them the opportunity to connect important themes with specific West African culture. Notwithstanding the above, there were times in the chapter where he lost focus and attempted to weave together too many unrelated themes. Specifically, Frowd provided a commentary on gender division and migration in the middle of a broader commentary on vehicles as security technologies. I believe that he would have been better served by introducing different themes one at a time, instead of all at once. This would have made it easier to follow along as a reader and would have also kept focus on the major themes; that cooperation and shared intelligence between states promotes innovation and security culture as a whole.

As a corollary to the argument made in Part III, Frowd again focuses on the multi-faceted border security interventions between West African states and other states in Part IV. He begins the chapter by recounting a suicide bomb attempt that was made in Nouakchott, the capital of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in 2009. He soon transitions to the ‘assemblage’ that formed in response to the terrorist attack and “builds on the theoretical framework of the previous chapters” (119). He re-introduces the term “socio-technical” border and argues for the increased advancement of border posts and the technologies and infrastructures that contribute to them. He makes similar commentaries on border posts being security technologies as he did in Part III; however, he deviates somewhat in his analysis of the reputational gains associated with creating a strong border post. To this end he argues that West African states such as Mauritania also enjoy “physical manifestation[s] of progress, which can be shown off to neighbors,” and that security professionals in these states may be equally motivated by prestige as they are by state-wide progress (p. 125). I favor this approach because it attaches human qualities to cross border issue. I believe that this allows readers to better understand and relate to some of the complex ideas that Frowd advances; and from a very human level, it also retains their attention.

With that being said, I think that Frowd potentially missed an opportunity to grab his audience by failing to describe the suicide bombing attempt in Mauritania in more detail. I believe that in failing to do so, he: (1) deprived readers the chance to form any type of catharsis; (2) and made the idea of terrorism seem esoteric rather than something that engenders human action and human emotion. In short, terrorism gives rise to fear—and in multiple different ways—and I wish that Frowd would have taken readers on that emotional journey.