



Sasha D. Pack.- *The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland* (California: Stanford University Press, 2019), 368 p.

Borders, Borderlands, and border crossings have been at the core of a still-running discussion across disciplines. Crucially, these concepts have gained more currency in today's debates. However, the question of borders dates back to many centuries ago. At this juncture, borders are not read solely in the physical sense, separating geographical areas, but they also have been queried as figurative. This being so, other concepts have been brought to the front, including cultural, racial, linguistic, and narrative borders. Worthy of notice, however, is also how borders have gained, throughout different times, political and historical significance. In this context, different processes are at play, particularly when borders are subject to the states' sovereignty and politics of space. It is within this framework that Sasha D. Pack's book can be inscribed. Focusing on the Strait of Gibraltar, this book proffers a historical perspective on Gibraltar as both a border and a borderland. *The Deepest Border: the Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland*, as its title overtly implies, pivots around the formation of the Gibraltar borderland society. It displays how Gibraltar is shaped as an "ethnically and politically pluralistic space," yielding a "discrete historical identity, adapting it to a single coherent narrative divided into distinct periods" (D. Pack, 1). In his study, D. Pack lays emphasis on modern periods, particularly from 1850 to 1970. In addition to a detailed introduction, D. Pack's book consists of three main parts, each of which covers a particular period in the modern history of the Gibraltar region.

Deemed "one of the modern world's paradigmatic borders," The Strait of Gibraltar, as a "bicontinental space," connects the "South" and the "North," the "East" and the "West," "Colonial Africa" and "Imperial Europe," "Muslims" and "Christians," to cite but a few. More importantly, it is a site of frequent quarrels and acts of violence between different states and empires and/or imperial claims. By dint of its role as a site of ongoing negotiation, the border of Gibraltar received much attention. In this respect, D. pack draws the readers' attention to the fact the function of the border is not only to mark a territorial space, but it also heralds the presence of different cultures, identities,

and histories. In this respect, borders are not just physical lines demarcating spaces. They are also metaphorical borders, articulating the existence of multiple ethno-religious communities. In examining the dynamics that shaped the processes of interactions between these communities, the author unpacks the making of Gibraltar as a borderland community. Hence, labels such as “Hispano-Muslim” civilization ostensibly indicate the higher degree of influence on both “shores,” owing to mass mobility and interactions but which also render the Gibraltar a “shatter zone” of violence and conflicts. Interestingly, the presence of Britain in the region cannot go unnoticed, and it has in fact played a major role in shaping and reshaping the politics of Gibraltar. Given that borders are “historical processes,” in D. Pack’s words, the book at hand relies on different sources of information, encompassing archives, documents, memories, travel narratives, biographies, as well as military reports.

The book’s first part is entitled “From Shatter Zone to Borderland, 1850-1900.” It taps into the making of the trans-Gibraltar during the second half of the nineteenth century. Here D. Pack accounts for the ways in which the strait was a site of much crossing, trade, as well of other phenomena. Being so yielded different responses from different countries which sought presence in the Gibraltar. Nevertheless, the British and Spanish imperial claims were salient during this period. The Spanish intervention in the Strait was a bid to limit the British attempts to interfere and influence in the region. Owing to different tensions and conflicts between Spain and Britain around the Strait and Morocco, the question of “imperial borders” came to the fore. In this sense, many agreements and disagreements characterized the Spanish-British relations in the isthmus. D. Pack alludes to the first treaties, including that of Utrecht, which legitimized the British propriety of some parts of the Gibraltar. But violence, smuggling, gunpowder... always continued. Different treaties were revised, and the Spanish and British attempts to establish clear juridical boundaries were faced with resistance by the Gibraltarian merchants. This warranted the cooperation of the Spanish and the British. However, crises around the Gibraltar borderland were not settled, demanding imperial and sovereign borders. The “Entente Cordiale” treaty of 1904 made it possible to redraw the map of North Africa, bringing thus order and serenity to the space of the Trans-Gibraltar. This paved the path for the emergence of different communities of people, including tourists and settlers, who intermingled, making the Gibraltar a “plurisited” space of interactions.

The first decades of the twentieth century heralded a new way of dealing with borders on the part of European diplomats. This is illustrated in part two

“Between Borderland and Empire, 1900-1939. Part of this part’s focus is how Morocco, being subject to the Protectorate in 1912, was divided into different parts, indicating the new imperial strategies to deal with borders. In this, Morocco was thus under the Spanish and French imperialism, yet Britain’s presence was also discernible. Within such a context, imperial tensions were prevalent, exploiting different agents in quest for more benefits from the occupation of Morocco. The imperial powers supported “rebels” with regional power and influence in Morocco, including Bu Hmara and Raisuni, for their own gain. The same applied to the imperial merchants in Morocco. In this sense, the Trans-Gibraltar became more bordered. Strikingly, World War I brought about different legal and political conditions on Spain and Morocco. The latter were both involved in the European conflict of 1914. Crucially, other imperial ambitions in Morocco, including the Germany’s, could not go unobserved, and this was best reflected in the Germans’ commercial and military endeavors. In this regard, the war’s influence on the trans-Gibraltar space is significant. In fact, this space became of much more dispute. Other events, including the Riff Rebellion, are foregrounded, for the key role they played in reshaping the imperial requirements on Morocco. It is indeed after the Riff War and the Spanish civil war that the British army sought more opportunities in the trans-Gibraltar region, complicating more questions of sovereignty.

The last period D. Pack’s book taps into is 1936-1970. Chief among the events characterizing this period were the Spanish civil war, World War II, and the American arrival in Rota after 1953. As part three, “Toward a New Paradigm, 1936-1970,” clearly examines, these events brought about what D. Pack labels as a “New Paradigm” in the trans-Gibraltar region. The latter went through turbulent changes. Different agents were involved, particularly during the W.W. II. These included mainly Germany and Italy on the one hand, and France and Britain on the other. Various coalitions were drawn, and which the Gibraltar was “the theatre of confrontation.” This yielded different responses and led to the foreign presence in Morocco in particular and Africa in general. In fact, the failure of “Eurafrica,” a German idea of partnership between Europe and Africa, could be read as paving the path for more imperial intervention in Africa. In this context, different forms of nationalism came to the fore in quest for independence and decolonization. Moroccan nationalism, with the support of the European “socialists,” contributed to the disruption of the Gibraltar’s existing borders. Strikingly, the departure of Western empires from Morocco and the neighboring countries marked a challenge to the “old order” in the Gibraltar region. It is, in D. Pack’s sense, the end of the modern

borderland, hence the beginning of a new age of mass mobility and movement to Europe. As space of tumultuous changes throughout different periods, the Gibraltar region remains one of multiple legacies, histories, and cultures.

Examining more than one century of the history of the Gibraltar region, *The Deepest Border* remains a groundbreaking study on “one of the modern world’s paradigmatic borders.” The book explores the Gibraltar’s chief events such as imperial interventions, Morocco’s colonization and decolonization, World Wars, and the Spanish civil war, to cite but a few. In doing so, it proffers a comprehensive historical description of the ways the border is shaped and reshaped throughout a long period. This enables the reader to aptly follow the long and complex history of the region. The book’s use of various sources, including archives, documentaries, travel narratives, biographies, as well as military intelligence reports provides more paths towards valid information and sound arguments. Important to note is also the fact that the book covers not only the Gibraltar border but also other crucial zones in the Mediterranean and North African region. This provides readers with serious insights into the imperial long history of North Africa in general, as well as the making and unmaking of borders between the North and the South. A good understanding of history thrives on a highly detailed account of historical events. As a matter of fact, D. Pack’s book has successfully performed this function. Being an important contribution into border/borderland studies makes *The Deepest Border* an unavoidable reference in North African border studies in particular, and border studies in general.

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