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**BOOK REVIEW**

**Longo, Matthew, *The Politics of Borders: Sovereignty, Security, and the Citizen after 9/11*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 248 pages.**

Ours is a continuously mobile existence. A commercially integrated world necessitates constant movement of people and goods across various frontiers. Now, such a state of affairs complicates the hitherto non-negotiable manifestations of political sovereignty namely, territorial authority and control over entry and exit.

Should we modify our traditional characterization of sovereignty? Should we re-examine citizenship? Should we redesign our security paradigm? How far do technological advances influence the flow of traffic across borderlands? These are the questions that Matthew Longo attempts to address in this volume. It is a work of political science that deals with the altered nature of borders and frontiers that has come about in the last 15 years or so, and how that change could affect citizenship and a state's security posturing. Furthermore, the author deconstructs some of the binaries that, according to him, we have been taking for granted. For instance, an us/them binary that is inherent in any border. Speaking of deconstruction, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida also appear sporadically.

The book comprises of two parts. The first one deals with 'The Perimeter' while the next sheds light on 'The Ports of Entry'. Each of them is subdivided into three parts. The context is situated within the post 9/11 United States of America, though the European Union, South Africa, Israel, and China also occur when the author places his perspective on the globe.

The term 'Perimeter' encompasses the infrastructure that oversees movement across frontiers. We are introduced here to 'zone of vigilance', 'zone of heterogeneity', and 'zone of surveillance'. It is suggested that contemporary reality fundamentally differs from classical conception of borders. Whereas back then states built structures to prevent any hostile

breach, today, borders require bilateral supervision as they experience considerable trade and commerce. The dynamics of this 'periphery' are not similar to that of the 'center'. The citizenry located in the borderlands experience not only the overwhelming infrastructure installed there for the purpose of monitoring, such increased presence of state security apparatus may infringe upon their fundamental rights. It is a region where civil and military arrangements overlap, and where the definition of citizenship changes. It begins to resemble a colony being ruled by a distant imperial authority. Also, the near constant comings and goings necessitate a bilateral mechanism of border management, which shakes one of the foundations of sovereignty. The author mentions developments in this regard that have taken place between the US and Mexico, and the US and Canada.

The next part discusses 'The Ports of Entry'. It stands on the trivet of 'Politics of Identification', 'Politics of Trust', and the 'Global Firewall'. It is claimed that government bureaucracy has overwhelmed the individual. He/She is being watched and analysed through the state database every time he moves across the frontier. His virtual profile is a parallel identity that has become essential for smooth travel. Secondly, these details are now being shared with the authorities across the border, which calls for trust and greater coordination between two sovereign governments. Here again, as the author suggests, sovereignty breaks ranks with its classical expression. Thirdly, there is a challenge of 'Third Country Nationals', and how people who have little or no verifiable virtual documentation may encounter hostility at the hands of border bureaucracy. The decisions made at ports - regarding entry/exit or interrogation of travellers - are made on the basis of 'Big Data', which is blind and does not have a sovereign's acquiescence. The reason behind this lack of sovereignty is private or corporate nature of 'Big Data'. Therefore, it is national in nature but not sovereign and official in its capacity. Consequently, it challenges the classic Westphalian style sovereignty of state, and damages the politics of trust. Moreover, the public also gets affected by it because data filtration is citizenship-blind. It converts people into *de facto* non-citizens. Consequently, it directly influences the position of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) and minorities of the state.

Lastly, cooperation and collaboration among states in data sharing is prerequisite for border security and cyber security. Nevertheless, on the

flip side, the ever intruding state through Big Data has weakened the democratic social contract. The obsession with Big Data seems to have out-casted those not registered digitally. The sanctity of privacy and consent is gradually eroding, and human beings are being replaced by numbers and algorithms, which the author cautions as a disturbing development.

In a nutshell, the author has tried to trigger an intellectual exercise over the pressing issues of borders and sovereignty, and, needless to say, its timing is crucial. Reports on border walls, fences, and increased militarization of frontier areas to halt illegal inflows are dominating our news bulletins. Any serious and long-term initiative may have to tackle challenges outlined in this particular volume.

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