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### **Review of Sasha D. Pack, *The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland***

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**Pack, Sasha D. *The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. 342 pp.**

Structured around three pivotal timeframes in the construction of European borders and expansion (1850-1900, 1900-39 and 1936-70), this book engages with the historical and conceptual complexities of a dense sea-space border region, maritime corridor, transit zone, and point of imperial convergence: the Strait of Gibraltar. The geographically sensitive Strait has long been flanked by a number of pseudo-colonial outposts: the British *peñón* of Gibraltar, the city of Tangiers on Morocco's northern coast, and the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla further to the east. The "deepest border" to which Sasha D. Pack alludes in the title has been a geopolitical and transactional zone for centuries and continues to be pivotal today as "a common area of concern for the states of the Western Mediterranean" (279).

*The Deepest Border* adopts a multiregional historical perspective to assess questions such as the relationship between sovereignty, governance, control, mobility, and transfer within this dense space, crisscrossed—and contested—by numerous binary categories and definitions ("bicontinental space" among them). Divided into twelve chapters, it traces the shifting position of the region "from shattered zone to borderland" with the establishment of British Gibraltar; as an arena for colonial expansion and ostensible neutrality in the interwar period; to the role during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime; and, finally, into its latest formulation as a route for migration towards Europe.

As in any site where multiple political, legal, and administrative regimes simultaneously operate, sovereignty is not a concept inherently associated with a single state, but rather a more fluid one, often shared and subject to ongoing renegotiation. Within this paradigm, concrete forms of "borderland politics" evolve and prosper, encompassing individuals, networks, and conglomerates that draw advantage from the region's ambiguity or plurality of management, who also become central actors in this region's affairs (examples explored in this book include the "potentates" Bu Hmara, Raisuni, and Juan March, discussed in Chapter 5). Ambiguities in borderland governance in the trans-Gibraltar space, have also been exploited by states, as was the case with Germany, which endeavored "to undermine both Spanish and Moroccan commitments to the Entente" (139-140).

The Spanish and Moroccans are not the only two actors at play in this region; the British, French and Algerian are often just as important, depending on the context and the historical circumstance. Its history is long and complex; the author traces the story back to 1492 and the conquest of the kingdom of Granada.

But the core of this book centers around these two players, from the Hispano-Moroccan war of 1859-60 until Spain's entrance into the European Community in 1986. For Pack, Spanish foreign relations are essentially forged over its Mediterranean borders. "Modern Spain's engagement in European affairs has taken place almost entirely on its southern borderland—putatively colonial space" (8).

While primarily focused on geopolitical relations, regional repositionings, and bordering, *The Deepest Border* also pays close attention to social sensibilities, the spread of epidemics, multiethnic relations, calculated "conviviality" and, finally, human mobility (from tourists and settlers to military personnel, migrant laborers, merchants and "smuggling networks"). "In Tangier," Pack observes, "tourists blended with other travelers, particularly merchants and migrant laborers—Christian, Jewish and Muslim—who circulated constantly between Gibraltar, Tangier, Ceuta, Algeciras and Cádiz, in search of customers, finance, work, pleasure and family" (91-92).

The book offers the reader multiple opportunities to reflect on the long-lasting impact of historical interactions and competition in this complex region, including colonial occupation and expansion; indeed, it closes, appropriately, with a section on "legacies and lessons." Attesting to the long history of colonialism, the exclaves of "Ceuta and Melilla both remain militarized to a degree far out of proportion with their size, a historical legacy that has adapted to an ongoing struggle to contain illegal cross-border traffic in drugs, arms, and people," while "street names ensure public memory of colonial officers and Falangists of the protectorate period" (277). However, the most significant lesson on borderland management, born out of the history of the nineteenth century covered in this book, is that "cooperation and alignment of sovereign interests is a precondition for any regional community of states to manage mobility effectively" (279).

*The Deepest Border* draws on an abundance of sources, including military and diplomatic archives, political records, bilateral agreements, cartographic material, and local municipal archives and periodicals; it also draws on a significant number of literary and ethnographic sources, including travel writing and biographies. Pack's book is a welcome addition to the recent scholarship in border studies and Mediterranean studies. It offers new perspectives on Spanish history from its southern borderlands, while providing a thorough transnational exploration of "Hispano-Moroccan" geopolitics.

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