Inclusion of Borderlanders in Border Management in Africa: Toward an Emancipatory Framework for the Study and Management of African Borders

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Abstract: African borderlands are sites where the state, borderlanders, criminal groups, and other groups compete and cooperate to achieve diverse interests. They are also zones of competing perspectives on security. However, current border security policies and practices operate within a restrictive neorealist theoretical paradigm with the state as the referent object of security thereby ignoring other perspectives on security. The vulnerabilities of borderlanders and the role of the border as a source of livelihood demand new ways of thinking about African borders in order to incorporate these major stakeholders into the bordering process. Although the adoption of the African Union’s integrated border management strategy holds the potential to reconcile the needs of borderlanders with the objectives of the state, it remains within the restrictive neorealist framework. This paper argues that an emancipatory security theory provides an appropriate framework to understand African borders and borderlands. This theory holds the key for enhancing the security of African borders by reconciling the needs of borderlanders with the objectives of state security, and thereby making people and communities the referent objects of security. However, the failure of the theory to engage with the concept of power limits its usefulness.

Resumen: Las zonas fronterizas africanas son sitios donde el estado, los habitantes de dichas zonas, los grupos criminales y otros grupos compiten y cooperan para lograr diversos intereses. También son zonas de perspectivas competitivas en materia de seguridad. Sin embargo, las políticas y las prácticas actuales de seguridad fronteriza operan dentro de un paradigma teórico neorrealista restrictivo donde el estado es el objeto de referencia de seguridad, lo cual hace que se ignoren otras perspectivas sobre la seguridad. Las vulnerabilidades de los habitantes de las zonas fronterizas y el papel que desempeña la frontera como fuente de sustento exigen nuevas maneras de concebir las fronteras africanas a fin de incorporar a estos principales grupos de interés en los procesos relacionados con las fronteras. Si bien la adopción de la estrategia integrada de gestión fronteriza de la Unión Africana tiene el potencial de alinear las necesidades de los habitantes de las zonas fronterizas con los objetivos del estado, no deja de estar integrada en el marco neorrealista restrictivo. Este artículo sostiene que una teoría de seguridad emancipadora proporciona un marco apropiado para comprender las fronteras y zonas fronterizas africanas. Esta teoría es fundamental para mejorar la seguridad de las fronteras africanas al alinear las necesidades de los habitantes de las zonas fronterizas con los objetivos de seguridad del estado, así como para convertir a las personas y las comunidades en objetos de referencia de la seguridad. Sin embargo, al
The international boundaries of Africa are among the most porous in the world. Since independence, the boundaries have been recognized as potential sources of conflict and insecurity on the continent (Ikome 2012). One of the major reasons for the porosity of African boundaries is the way they have been shrouded by divided ethnic and cultural groups. For example, about 109 international boundaries have divided some 177 ethnic groups across Africa (Griffiths 1996). By virtue of their presence in the border space, African borderlanders are major stakeholders in the bordering process. Their livelihoods and survival depend on cross-border activities (trading, human smuggling, goods smuggling, smuggling facilitation, and so on). Some of these activities are officially regarded as crimes. Borderlanders are also important sources of security intelligence on the operations of criminal groups due to their deep-rooted knowledge of the border terrain (Lamptey 2013).

Unfortunately, border security policies in Africa are based on state-centric concepts such as ungoverned spaces and national security. This has led to the failure to incorporate the economic and welfare needs of borderlanders into security policies. This failure has provided the incentive for borderlanders to contest and circumvent border security measures in the quest to earn a livelihood (Flynn 1997; Chalfin 2001; Nugent 2011). The result has left the borders more porous as border residents aid criminals to evade security systems at the borders (Hlovor 2018).

A recent development in border management on the continent is the drive toward the adoption of the Integrated Border Management (IBM) approach spearheaded by the Africa Union. The approach is spelled out in the Draft African Union Border Governance Strategy 2017 (formerly the Draft African Union Draft Strategy for the Enhancement of Border Management in Africa 2012). One key aspect of the adoption of the approach in Africa is the deliberate attempt to make
community participation one of the pillars of the approach. Although this is a healthy development, I argue here that the approach operates in a neorealist framework by privileging the security of the state over the security of people and communities. Borderlanders and communities are seen as the means to the security of the state rather than the referent objects of security. To be effective, border security must be understood within a different conception of security.

In this article, I put forth the argument that studying and managing African borders within the framework of emancipatory security studies would enhance the border security situation in Africa. I pursue this argument by first showing how Africa’s borderlands are prone to many security issues. I also argue that African governments lack the capacity to secure the full stretch of their borders. Also, African borderlanders are key stakeholders in the border landscape with vulnerabilities. Addressing their needs is important to border security. Secondly, I note that the concept of integrated border management lacks the theoretical sophistication to address the socioeconomic dimensions of border management in Africa because it operates in a restrictive statist framework by focusing on the security of the state rather than the security of people. Although the African Union Strategy attempts to elicit community participation, it remains within the restrictive statist framework. Thus, integrated border management in Africa would benefit from operating within an emancipatory security framework. I build on the theory of emancipatory security associated with Booth (2005) and Jones (1999) to make the case for a shift in the analysis of border security from focusing on states to focusing on people and communities.

The paper relies mainly on secondary data. It draws on evidence from studies of borders and borderlanders across Africa, particularly West Africa. It also draws on studies on emancipatory theory and integrated border management to elaborate on the theoretical propositions that can enhance border security in Africa. The next section highlights some features of African borders.

The Nature of Africa’s Political Boundaries

The political boundaries of Africa emerged within two to three decades after the Berlin or Congo Conference of 1884/5 (Kapil 1966; Griffith 1986). They were later institutionalized by the Organization for African Unity/African Union and African states through the adoption of the “common law of successor state,” whereby each African state occupies the territory bequeathed to it at independence by the respective colonial masters (Touval 1967, 664). Although precolonial African society had an idea of boundaries, such an idea did not connote a sense of the sharp end of divided territory and power associated with the modern state (Ahmed 2014). Precolonial African political organizations were remarkably different from the modern state, and boundaries existed as social constructions and zones through which human and intercommunity relations were regulated (Ajula 1983; Ahmed 2014). Thus, the concept of exclusive political control over territory was largely alien to the precolonial Africa society (Pierre, Stacy, and Matthew 2002).

The extensive use of straight lines and geographical features in demarcating boundaries is a common feature across Africa. According to Touval (1966, 291), some 30 percent of African boundaries follow straight lines, and the remaining 70 percent are delimited in terms of geographical features. Ajula (1983, 181) similarly noted that “about thirty percent of all international boundaries in Africa are straight line boundaries.” According to Ajula (1983, 181), “it is evident that these types of boundaries were arbitrary imposed upon the peoples of Africa by the colonial powers.”

The use of straight lines and geographical features reflects two issues in the development of political boundaries in Africa. One, the boundaries were drawn “by Europeans for Europeans” (Griffith 1986, 205). They were not drawn for Africans;
thus, even where attempts were made to incorporate the interest of Africans, African interest was subservient to the interest of European powers. Secondly, as stated earlier, pre-colonial African political organizations were remarkably different from the modern state. Political power was exercised over the group and not the territory, although some kingdoms like the Old Ghana Empire, the kingdom of Buganda, and the Ashanti kingdom had systems of rule comparable to European states with power established over territory. It was difficult to demarcate Africa on the basis of the preexisting political groupings since many parts were inhabited by groups without precise territory limit (Herbst 1989, 2000). Indeed, even such an attempt would have Africa divided into many smaller political groupings than there are today.

The use of straight lines and geographical features has produced boundaries that in most cases are devoid of any form of ethnic rationality. Ethnic or tribal groupings and families are divided among separate sovereign states (Ajula 1983; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2012). Transnational kinship ties among divided ethnicities have allowed for frequent and largely unhampered cross-border mobility and trade among members (Austin 1963; Griffiths 1995). In some cases, cross-border relationships or networks between cross-border groups have resulted in tension and acrimony between neighboring states. For example, the ethnic relations across the Ghana-Togo border have been a source of tension between the two countries since independence with accusations and counteraccusations from each side of harboring and sponsoring insurgents. Ethnic conflicts in some instances involve support from kinsmen across the border thereby drawing the governments of both states into them (Austin 1963; Bening 1983). This has led to the securitization of border populations in parts of Africa.

Africa’s political boundaries and borderlands are therefore characterized by high levels of ethnic divisions, local cross-border mobility, informal cross-border trade, and issues of insecurities. The issue of insecurity in African borderlands is addressed in the next section.

Insecurity in African Borderlands

African borderlands present many security issues to residents. These insecurities relate partly to the inability of the African state to fully project power and exercise control over the full stretch of its territory due to weak state capacity. The limited capacity of the state means that it is forced to concentrate on areas of export production. As pointed out by Clapman (1999), the postcolonial African state has retreated from the frontier (periphery) to the areas of export production (center/capital). The frontier is seen by African elites as not significant for economic resource extraction (Clapham 1999; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012), leading to strategic neglect by governments (Asiwaju 1985, 240). Besides the limited resource extraction hypothesis, there is also the genuine lack of capacity on the part of the African state—in terms of logistics and personnel—to control the frontier. Along the South Sudan border, for example, nonstate actors operate in the absence of the state (Schomenus and Vries 2014). The problem facing African state builders is the difficulty in projecting state power and control to remote, sparsely populated, inhospitable regions (Herbst 2000, 11).

Although it is true that the African state seems to retreat from the frontier, this retreat is selective. In areas of natural resource endowment and strategic border posts for tax extraction, the physical presence of the state manifests in the form of border and customs posts. The result of the retreat of the African state is the neglect or marginalization of African borderlands characterized by poor socioeconomic infrastructure. Evidence suggests that border areas in West Africa are among the most economically deprived and neglected areas of the continent. With the exception of places with border markets, poverty, unemployment, and a lack of social amenities are major challenges in most African borderlands (Flynn 1997; Aning and Pokoo
Thus, borderlanders suffer threats to economic material well-being. Border areas are also zones where civil conflicts are more likely to occur because of neglect, underdevelopment, and border porosity. Using statistical summaries of the distance to the nearest border from the Armed Location and Event Data (ACLED) database, Hadley (n.d.) shows that there is a significant correlation between conflict events and closeness to international borders. Buhaug and Rød (2006) put forth the structural grievance hypothesis, which posits that local conditions centered on the core-periphery divide have been the main cause of territorial conflict around border areas. They note that conflicts are more likely in sparsely populated and undeveloped areas around international borders. In northern Mali, Raleigh and Dowd (2013) affirm this by noting that local conditions and grievances relating to poverty and underdevelopment influence violence in the border region. The effects of violent conflicts near or across borders are well-known and documented in Africa. Loss of life, internal displacement, and refugee flows are common outcomes of this violence. Cross-border attacks on border populations also are threatening to life in the border regions (Lischer 2005; Buhaug and Rød 2006; Kanyangara 2016) Thus, African borderlanders are at a higher risk of being caught in or affected by armed conflicts.

In addition, weak state capacity in border areas has been exploited by various transnational criminal groups and local armed groups, including terrorist groups and rebel groups. A study by the United Nations Development Programme (2017) into the drivers of violent extremism in Africa notes that, although attacks in cities make headlines, violent extremism is rooted in remote areas and often borderlands. These areas have experienced generations of political, social, and economic neglect and marginalization (United Nations Development Programme 2017). Evidence from the West African region supports this position. Terrorist groups have been active mainly in border regions. For instance, Boko Haram operates from bases in the border areas between Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon; Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has bases in the border regions of Northern Mali, Southern Algeria, and Northern Niger (Hlovor 2018, 51). The presence and operations of these groups in border regions leave residents in such areas vulnerable to violent extremism. The UN Development Programme notes that individual experiences living in periphery areas including borderlands and other marginalized areas have a significant effect on vulnerability and subsequent recruitment into terrorist groups (UNDP 2017). Borderlanders also are at higher risk of forced recruitment and violent attacks by violent groups in border areas.

Cross-border crimes, including arms smuggling, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and cross-border violent attacks on border communities also affect the border population disproportionately. Border populations and borderlands often become securitized by governments particularly in areas of ongoing rebellion or terrorist activities (Raleigh and Dowd 2013). The activities of the state to enforce control in marginalized border regions may be counterproductive as these put the border population at further risk of violence. The securitization of border populations may occasion the deployment of extreme measures that deny the populations the space for political participation and drive them further toward involvement in violence (Onuoha 2014; UNDP 2017).

Borderland populations may also be viewed with suspicion in areas where the boundary divides the same ethnic group between different states. This suspicion may lead to strategic neglect or securitization. Securitization may lead to obstructive border policies and the use of violence by the state. Thus, the state may become a source of insecurity. It may also close avenues for political participation to borderlanders when attempting to enforce security over the periphery.

In sum, African borderlanders face both foundational and procedural security threats. They are vulnerable to many issues of insecurity including being vulnerable...
to recruitment to transnational criminal groups, poverty, and physical violence sometimes perpetuated by the state. Many of these security threats emerge from the weak capacity and security policies of African states. Since the activities of the state in the name of security in borderlands may produce insecurities for borderlanders, it is important for state authorities to actively engage the border population in enforcing border security policies.

**Interest, Conflict, and Cooperation in the Borderland: The Limit of Existing State Practice**

The nature of African borders produces a particular context within which border management is situated across the continent. Although the techniques and processes of managing borders have been derived from border-management practices elsewhere, they nevertheless operate in an environment with remarkably different economic, social, and political elements. African borders are both economic and political resources. They are economic resources because of the dependence of borderlanders on border traffic, control of cross-border mobility, and trade for survival (Nugent and Asiwaju 1996; Flynn 1997; Chalfin 2001; Nugent 2002 2011; Lentz 2003).

Since the imposition of the boundaries, African borderlanders have recognized them as power resources, selectively appealing to them for both political and economic reasons. In matters of cross-border trade and cross-border mobility, borderlanders consciously or unconsciously ignore the existence of the boundaries (Lentz 2003; Nugent 2011). However, in local conflicts with neighboring groups over resources, they appeal to the boundaries as political tools to claim or deny rights of usage to the group at the other side of the boundary (Lentz 2003). They also use boundaries to evade state control. Borderlanders are deeply embedded in the border landscape with unparalleled knowledge of the border terrain (Lamptey 2013). They usually employ their “embeddedness” in the border space to both resist the state and draw it and its representatives into compromise (Flynn 1997; Chalfin 2001; Raunet 2016). Events in Africa’s border spaces are not dictated by the formal rules of the state but rather the informal “codes of conduct” established through daily practices and interactions between the state and the communities along and across the border (Nugent 2011; Raunet 2016). What is legal/illega or legitimate/illegitimate within the border space is beyond the exclusive control of the state. In most cases, borderlanders seemed to have more control of events in the African border space than the states (Flynn 1997; Raunet 2016). Enforcement of official state policies is contested and resisted by borderlanders. Enforcement of the informal codes of conduct results in peaceful relations between borderlanders and border agencies but compromises border security arrangements. Daily border management and security practices are constructed and reconstituted through interaction between the activities of borderlanders and border agencies.

Three main interests compete and cooperate for the control of cross-border mobility and security processes within African borderlands. First is the national or state interest, second is the individual and community interest of borderlanders on the other hand. The third interest relates to criminal groups wanting to explore the border for crimes.

The interest of the state is to safeguard the territorial sovereignty by enforcing the border as a line that separates the “we or good” inside from the “them or bad” outside. The goal is to allow only friendly or less harmful actors into the state. State activities at the border are also motivated by the need to extract revenue and protect the national economy. Meanwhile, borderlanders are motivated by the need for economic survival as individuals and communities. The border is important to the economic life of African borderlanders. To them, the border represents two
issues in their economic survival strategy: the border is “an opportunity and conduit” and “a barrier” to economic survival \cite{nugent-asiwaju1996}. The third group, transnational criminal groups, have an interest in exploiting border porosity and weaknesses to undertake nefarious activities. I concentrate on the first two interests (state and borderlanders) in this discussion. Corresponding to these two interests are two views of security in the border space \cite{allen2012}: the narrow traditional understanding of security, which has the state as the referent object of security, and a broader nontraditional understanding of security, which has the individual and the community as the referent object of security.

### The State and Border Security

By state, we refer to a clearly demarcated sovereign political territory recognized by international law and other entities of similar nature (that is, other states) with an established government to represent and protect its interest. State officials in the border space aim to protect the national interest. The national interest defines the activities of the state at the margins. While the concept of national interest has been a driving force for diplomatic and security undertakings since the emergence of the modern state and diplomacy, it lacks conceptual consensus.

\cite{morgenthau1962} made a distinction between two levels of national interest: the vital or core interest and the secondary interest. The vital interest refers to those issues that relate to the physical existence or survival of the state that must be defended by any means possible including going to war \cite{morgenthau1952,morgenthau1962}. International political borders fall within this core interest of the state. The ability of the state to protect its territory from encroachment by other states is seen in realist terms as a measure of state capability and a guide to foreign policy \cite{morgenthau1952,waltz1959,clausewitz1976}.

Corresponding to this realist conception of national interest is the concept of national security. The notion of national security is reflected in the classical and often quoted definition of \cite{lippmann1943}. According to \cite{lippmann1943}, “a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values (legitimate interests), if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war.” \cite{cohen-tuttle1972} posit a similar view that “security may be defined as a protective condition, which statesmen either try to acquire, or preserve, in order to guard the various components of their politics from either external or internal threats.” The same notion can be found in the writing of \cite{wolfers1952}, who states that “security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threat to acquired values, in the subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.” Although national security has largely been understood in military terms, other issues such as the national economy and wealth are also understood as national security issues.

Border security within the framework of national security aims at defending the territorial integrity of the state against external forces. The state is the object of security. The aim of security policy is to protect the interest of the state. The state is seen as the embodiment of a good life or security. Without the state, the individual lives in a Hobbesian state of nature. In this, border agencies have the task of preventing harmful actors from entering the state territory. The focus is on the use of military force to deny undesirable actors entry into the state.

Since security is equated with state presence and regulation, the absence of the state is taken as a threat to national security. The so-called “ungoverned spaces” that have formed the basis of both local and international efforts at controlling borders and border regions in Africa derive from the above view. However, as noted by \cite{clunan-trinkunas2010}, the areas often classified as ungoverned spaces are areas of contested governance or alternative governance structures. Alternative governance structure often provided by nonstate actors emerge to provide services
that the state is mandated to provide in areas where the state is unable or unwilling to perform its mandate. Alternative governance structures derive legitimacy from the ability to provide state-like functions in partnership with or absence of the state. Unfortunately, the state-centric notion of security often leads to the neglect of these structures of governance. Efforts to impose the state structure on the local structure of governance in the name of state-building or capacity-building normally result in the resistance of alternative governing authorities and local populations. This may sometimes result in violent confrontations in borderlands.

In African borderlands, the national interest and the role of the state is fluid and difficult to define in practice. States may encourage illicit cross-border movements and the violation of the territory of neighboring states by nonstate actors. Thus, instead of defending the border, governments may strategically encourage border porosity as a means of destabilizing other states. Charles Taylor’s activities in support of warlords in Sierra Leone demonstrate this point. This is also a strategy normally used by states with poor economies to promote the absorption of their citizens into the more prosperous neighboring economies or in cases where smuggling favors a state against its neighbor (Adepoju 2005; Nugent 2011). Border agencies may also align themselves with criminal networks and smugglers in a situation described by Agbedahin (2014, 370) as “a multilayered border parasitism.” In this case, the official representatives of the state may not be implementing the officially defined objectives or interest of the state. Instead, they may cooperate with other actors to undermine it.

The goal of the state in borderlands is normally stated in national security terms. By defining border security as national security, political actors reserve the privilege to take actions without prior consultation with border residents. Within the framework of national security, issues such as the economic and political representation of borderlanders are normally subservient to narrowly defined physical and military security. Thus, the concepts of national interest and national security, which inform state security policies, are inadequate for addressing the many security issues confronting borderlanders. Their interest and needs may be ignored, and state efforts to suppress rebellion or fight terror at the margins may exacerbate their insecurities. The view of border security from the traditional perspective ignore the fact that the state itself can be a course of insecurities. There is lack of critical engagement with the state as a source of insecurity.

**Individual and Community interest**

The activities of borderlanders are influenced by a nontraditional (individual and community) perspective of security. Borderlanders have deep-seated interests in the border as their vehicle for survival (Flynn 1997; Nugent 2002; Raunet 2016). Economic and welfare issues inform the views of borderlanders on the purpose and functioning of the border. Hadley (n.d) notes that cross-border markets have prospered by taking advantage of market differentials at either side of unregulated borders in Africa. Cross-border markets located along unregulated border routes in West Africa have become major centers of economic traffic and exchanges (Niang 2013). The absence of the state and its regulatory agencies provide stimuli for the natural growth of these cross-border markets. These markets provide for livelihood needs of borderlanders at either side of the border. The fact that these markets mainly develop in unregulated border routes shows that the presence of the state through border agencies may hinder their growth. The imposition of official border posts and attempts to extract taxes or defend the national economic interest may deny hitherto flourishing cross-border livelihood activities (Flynn 1997).

Cross-border trade is the mainstay of the border economy. Walther (2012, 123) demonstrates that the development of cross-border regions or borderlands is highly dependent on the “the circulation developed by traders and the production
developed by agricultural investors.” Using cross-border traders and farmers in Niger, Benin, and Nigeria, he notes that their activities are centered on urban border markets. The development of border markets can promote trade and productivity in borderlands and beyond. This evidence he notes undermines concerns that cross-border trade is injurious to economic interest of the state (Walther 2012).

For borderlanders, the border is both an economic and political resource. Cross-border trade and mobility, which may be interrupted in the interest of national security, provide the means to cope with economic insecurities within the borderlands. However, this has largely been ignored within the national security framework. The failure to incorporate these divergent views has resulted in a lack of cooperation and the failure to make full use of the knowledge of border residents to enhance border security in Africa.

Security involves more than physical protection for the borderlanders. While the state officials are mainly concerned about physical security and the national interest, borderlanders are concerned with livelihood and welfare issues. Thus, the conception of security from the standpoint of the state is different from that of borderlanders. The state privileges issues of physical security within a realist national security framework, while borderlanders often privilege economic security reflected in efforts to make livelihoods along the borders.

To be effective, approaches to border management or security have to integrate or reconcile both views within the border space. The rest of this article elaborates on how critical security studies in the Welsh School tradition offers a dynamic balance between the two approaches by redefining the role of the state in security. Before proceeding to engage with critical security studies, it is important to make some observations about integrated border management since, although it has the potential to transform border management in line with emancipatory security theory, as yet it falls short.

**Integrated Border Management in Africa**

To ensure that African borders are managed in ways that promote peace, security, and continental integration, the African Union and its progenitor the Organization of African Unity have taken active interest in the issue of African borders. The first substantive action of the Organization of African Unity in this regard was the adoption in 1964 of Resolution AHS/Res. 16(I), which calls for respect for borders inherited from colonialism and the settlement of border disputes by peaceful means. This call is also echoed by the Constitutive Act of the African Union in article 4(b). Similarly, Resolution CM/Res.1069 (XLIV) of July 1986 emphasized the need for negotiated settlement of border disputes on the continent. In the immediate postindependence era, the Organization of African Unity put emphasis on preserving interstate peace rather than addressing the numerous issues emanating from the nature of the political boundaries.

By the early 2000s, it became clear that respect for the colonial boundaries was not sufficient to ensure peace among neighboring African states, particularly in areas where the common political boundary was not properly delineated or demarcated and where different colonial maps yielded different interpretations of the exact location of the common border. In 2002, the African Union adopted the Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development, and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA). The memorandum aimed to ensure the proper delineation and demarcation of African boundaries within a ten-year period (2002–2012). However, the 2012 deadline was extended to 2017 in 2011 and, subsequently, to 2022 by the Declaration on African Union Border Programme and Measures for its Consolidation in 2016. The extensions of the deadline reflect the many technical, political, sociocultural, and economic impediments to the proper demarcation of Africa’s borders. The blurred common border between Malawi and Zambia and
the difficulties encountered in the efforts to demarcate it succinctly epitomize the situation in many other parts of Africa. The effort to redemarcate the common border was started by Malawi in 1993. The redemarcation resulted in parts of Malawi (Mchinji, Mzimba, Kasungu, and Rumphi) becoming Zambian territories. This new separation of communities has effected access to social services such as education in some communities (Mlambo 2018).

The adoption of the African Union Border Programme in 2007 was to provide a platform for the continuous engagement of relevant stakeholders on border issues in Africa. It aims to achieve the proper demarcation of boundaries, cross-border integration, and proper management of the borders. Subsequently, other major policies have been initiated to support or realize the objectives of the Border Programme. Of relevance to the discussion on borderlands are the Niamey Convention on Cross-border Co-operation in 2014 and the African Union Border Governance Strategy in 2017. The Niamey Convention aims to ensure the efficient and effective integrated management of borders to transform border areas into catalysts for growth, and socioeconomic and political integration of the continent (The Niamey Convention 2014, 3, emphasis mine). This was to be achieved through cooperation among local and national stakeholders in the border space and across the border.

The African Union Border Governance Strategy of 2012—that builds on the Draft African Union Strategy for Enhancing Border Management in Africa—provides the framework to narrow the implementation gap in border governance in Africa. Like the African Union Strategy for Enhancing Border Management in Africa (2012), the border governance strategy remains a draft document to allow for further deliberations and the incorporation of new ideas and developments on the border situation in Africa. The strategy is built on the integrated border-management approach, which has recently emerged within the European context (Marenin 2010). Integrated border management aims at integrating various stakeholders within the border space into the management of borders.

The African strategy calls for the development of border areas and engagement with border communities in the bordering process. Border development and community engagement form the fifth pillar of the border strategy. This aims to transform “the borders and borderlands into catalyst elements of peace, stability, growth, and socioeconomic and political integration of the continent” (African Union 2017, 36). The strategy acknowledges the deprivation and neglect of borderlands and incorporates the idea of development of borderlands as part of border governance and security. The strategy aims at achieving cooperation between local actors and national actors both within a particular state and across states. It involves cooperation among states in governing the common border and cross-border cooperation among communities across the border.

In line with the concept of integrated border management, various reforms are taking place in Africa. Many countries are developing common border-management guidelines and establishing One Stop Border Posts (OSBP). The Malaba-Busia OSBP on the Uganda/Kenya border and the newly inaugurated Noepé-Akanu OSBP along the Ghana/Togo border attest to this growing trend. These one-stop border posts provide the sites for coordination across the border among border agencies. These border posts are normally backed by bilateral agreements between the states involved. With the support of developing partners and donor agencies such as the German Development Agency, training on integrated border management has become commonplace in Africa. The effect of these reforms and developments is progress on interagency dialogue and cooperation among border agencies and states. Many border areas currently have border-management committees consisting of the various agencies working at a particular border. In some cases, joint border-management committees include border personnel from the countries sharing the common border. For instance, the Namanga Joint Border Coordinating Committee of Kenya and Tanzania include personnel from both countries.
Notwithstanding the important contributions that the adoption of the integrated border-management approach is making to border management and security in Africa, there is an absence of development and community involvement as envisaged in the African border governance strategy. This is because the prevailing conception or understanding of security that underpins the concept of integrated border management remains state-centric. Within the prevailing framework, the state remains the object of security. Interstate and interagency coordination within the border space take premium over local participation in practice. Subsequently, many of the border-management committees do not have community representation. The ongoing reforms, therefore, reinforce the neglect and marginalization of border populations in border governance.

For integrated border management to bring transformation and contribute to achieving the objectives of the African Union border governance strategy and the Niamey Convention, there is a need to rethink the conception of “security” in “border security.” This should start with situating the discussion of border security in Africa within an emancipatory framework. The next section elaborates the tenets of an emancipatory security.

Critical Security Studies

Critical security studies is an approach to the study of security that attempts to reveal the contradictions in prevailing theories or knowledge of security in order to open up the possibility of emancipation. It emerged within the debate to “rethink security” away from a narrow preoccupation with the state and military security in the 1990s (Baldwin 1995). It has since become an important theory within security studies (Browning and McDonald 2011).

Here, we will use the “emancipatory security theory” or the Welsh School of Critical Security Studies. In contrast to the focus on the state as the referent object of security, the Welsh School contends that the referent object of security is the “socially embedded individual” and not the state (Hynek and Chandler 2013, 50). The objects to be secured in this view are the individual and the community. In the words of Booth (1995, 123), security studies should focus on the “real people in real places.” What really is threatened, according to the Welsh School, is not an abstract object like the state but the individual as a person and/or groups of people. This claim puts the safety and security of individuals and the community as the goal of security. At best, the state is seen as the means to the security of the individual (Booth 1991, 319).

The concept of emancipation is central to the security agenda of the Welsh School. In the words of Booth (2007, 112), “emancipation seeks the securing of people from those oppressions that stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do, compatible with freedom of others.” Oppressions or threats may emanate from direct bodily violence (wars), structural, political, and economic domination (slavery), and more existential threats to identity (cultural imperialism) (Booth 1999). Emancipation implies freedom from the constraints that limit and/or prevent human choices. Emancipation is, therefore, the removal of structural constraints or barriers that prevent or obstruct some groups from total political participation and/or threats to the security of the individual.

Emancipation in this tradition is defined both in material or foundational and procedural terms. In the first part, emancipation is defined in a more foundational or material sense by linking it with the material condition of people as individuals or groups. On the other hand, emancipation is defined in procedural terms as the

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1 The initial definition of emancipation by Booth holds that emancipation implies “freeing people (as individuals or groups) from those physical and human constraints [that] stop them [from] carrying out what they would freely choose to do” (Booth 1991, 319).
opening up of space for political participation, deliberation, and dialogue (Jones 1999; Linklater 2005). Thus, emancipation within the Welsh School’s framework is both a means and an end. As a means, it represents dialogue and deliberation, which ultimately provides the avenue through which people can freely choose what under oppression they have not been able to do. As an end, it represents the material wellbeing or welfare of individuals and communities. It is this notion of security as emancipation that this study employs to provide new perspective on African border security.

**Emancipatory Theory and Border Management in African Border**

Adopting an emancipatory framework for approaching issues of border security in Africa implies a critical engagement with existing border security policies in Africa. The usefulness of this approach hinges on the understanding of security as the removal of structural constraints or barriers that prevent or obstruct some groups from total political participation and/or poses threats to the security of the individual. Conceived in these terms, the focus should be on how border policies enhance the security of people and communities. The vulnerabilities of borderlanders should become obvious. The reality of the border as an economic resource by which borderlanders achieve livelihood and survival goals must be incorporated into policies of border security. As shown by the dynamics of the growth of cross-border markets in West Africa, cross-border markets develop mainly in unregulated border routes and provide a hub for economic exchanges (Walther 2012; Niang 2013; Hadley n.d.). While state presence may inhibit this growth, within an emancipatory framework state presence instead may encourage it. Communities at both sides of the border may gain from cross-border economic exchanges within a framework that elevates their needs above national security and builds structures and policies to encourage the growth of economic opportunities such as cross-border markets and trade. The expansion of cross-border markets and trade is important in promoting the goals of both the Niamey Convention and the African border governance strategy of transforming border areas into catalyst for growth and the socioeconomic and political integration of the continent.

Again, within the emancipatory framework, the African state and its border policies would become subjects for analysis as sources of insecurity to people and communities. Thus, abuses of the state in the name of protecting the border or national security can be exposed. State practices may create conditions that abuse people and promote the growth of violent groups at the margins (Raleigh and Dowd 2013; United Nations Development Programme 2017). Issues of neglect, poverty, and underdevelopment may encourage the growth of violent groups that adversely impact borderlanders. Attempts to address violence through military means may worsen violence in the border areas. An emancipatory framework allows for a holistic approach for border areas to prevent violent groups from emerging and finding hospitable homes in these regions. Indeed, the focus on borderlanders as object of security may reduce the tendency of violence at the margins since issues that promote the economic growth of these regions will be addressed. Besides, the opportunity for dialogue and deliberation may provide legitimate and nonviolent means to resolve grievances of border groups and prevent them from resorting to violence.

Within an emancipatory framework a new understanding of borders and borderlanders within border security would emerge, which may transform how border agencies understand borderlanders and borders. As already discussed in this paper, African borderlanders are indispensable stakeholders in the border space. Their perspectives on the functions of the border are often different from the state. Within an emancipatory framework, African borderlanders would assume a greater focus in border policy. They would be understood as people whose interests should be served by border security policies and practices, instead of people who should
contribute to the security of the state. Viewed from this point, the interest of borderlanders would become central to border security. In other words, focusing on the interest of borderlanders permits border agencies to see border residents as people whose interests affect their duty to secure the border.

Once borderlanders become the referent object of border security in Africa, avenues of dialogue and participation in border policies become imperative. As state actors within the border space are obliged to understand the needs and interests of borderlanders, they are compelled to engage them by creating platforms for dialogue and participation. Thus, instead of the current practice of educating or soliciting the participation of borderlanders to help in the implementation of border policies and measures designed by state actors, borderlanders would participate in the formulation of policies that reflect their interests. This would promote the ownership of border policies by borderlanders. This would also elicit the voluntary participation of borderlanders. Finally this would achieve a dynamic balance between the needs of borderlanders and the interests of the state.

Although the current approach of using one-stop border posts and joint border-management committees is useful in achieving coordination and cooperation among states and border agencies, there is the need for border communities to have representation on these committees. By including representatives of border communities in the joint border-management committees, the views and the interests of borderlanders will at all times be incorporated into policies. This will open the avenue for continuous dialogue between the borderlanders on one hand and the state on the other. For example, the Sourou Cross-border Management Committee between Mali and Burkina Faso has strong local representation in areas that directly affect the local population. The cross-border integrated resource management committee has an equal number of representatives from the governments, local groups, and grassroots organizations. Having strong local representation on border-management committees is important for achieving community engagement as elaborated by the African Union border governance strategy.

Equally important in incorporating border communities is identification of informal networks and structures of cross-border cooperation and governance among border populations. Identifying and strengthening these alternative governance structures will make border governance responsive to the needs of border people and communities. As already noted, alternative governance structures normally develop to address the needs of people when the state is unable or unwilling to provide such needs. In this regard, these alternative structures of governance and cross-border cooperation are regarded and accorded more legitimacy by the local population. The absence of the state must not be equated to the lack of governance. Recognizing alternative structures of governance and incorporating them into border security efforts will enhance the legitimacy of the efforts and help solicit greater participation and cooperation of the local population.

However, in adopting this approach to security, there is the difficulty of determining which interests within the border space are legitimate and serve the greatest number of borderlanders. Creating avenues for political dialogue does not necessarily result in the determination of the most pressing needs of all people. Power relations and structures within a particular sociocultural and economic space filter and determine whose interest ultimately gets on the policy agenda (Gül 2009). Unfortunately, emancipatory security theory falls short in providing a convincing account of power. The concept of power remains vague in emancipatory theory. Although the concept is used frequently by Booth (1991), he is not clear about what power is or does in concrete terms (Nunes 2012). A clear understanding of power relations and structures is necessary for emancipatory security theory to provide a sophisticated analysis of insecurity (Nunes 2012). Roberts observes that, since the politics of security is a struggle for power, any theory of security without a clear approach to power is analytically incomplete (Robert 2012, 74).
Border areas are confluences of interests and power. Even in the absence of the state, power and control are exercised by local actors (Clunan and Trinkunas 2010; Raleigh and Dowd 2013). The competition for power within border areas makes it imperative to understand the groups or individuals that exercise power and the degree to which they are able to project such powers and present their interests in place of other interests. Groups with power promote their interests and reproduce these to build acceptance as the general interest of the people over time. The failure of emancipatory theory to provide an understanding of power and power relations makes it difficult to determine which interest will represent the interest of borderlanders. This provides room for powerful interests within the border space to supplant the general interest of borderlanders. It also opens up the possibility of individual interest being overrode by powerful groups and their interests. For instance, organized criminal groups and rebel groups may command more resources and influence within the border space than borderlanders. They may use their power positions to seize opportunities to reframe security away from the statist paradigm by presenting their interests instead of the interests of the regular people. They may be capable of taking control of the avenues for political participation through which the needs of borderlanders can be made known in the policy process. The problem is how to separate the legitimate needs of borderlanders from the manipulative effects of criminal elements seeking to evade or water down border rules.

Furthermore, emancipatory theory fails to provide a detailed account of the role of violence or military force in cases such as genocide or rebellion (Browning and McDonald 2011). In situations of ongoing violence, military action may be necessary for restoring stability. In Africa, where violence can quickly spread across borders, this is a fundamental challenge to the framework. Borderlands can be targeted by violent groups from neighboring war-torn areas as often happens in the Great Lakes region (Turner 2007, Kanyangara 2016). Violent groups can also use neighboring states as bases for attack across the border (Lischer 2005). Under these situations, military responses may become inevitable. However, the role of military force remains ambiguous within the framework of emancipatory security (Browning and McDonald 2011). Thus, the framework may not be suitable for regions of ongoing violence but useful in areas without violence for preventing future violence.

Conclusion

African borders are colonial creations. Populated by divided ethnic groups and families on either side, they are extremely permeable and porous. African governments in most parts are not able to fully secure their borders. The lives of African borderlanders are influenced by the border. Daily activities and livelihood are conditioned by the presence of the border and the bordering process. To be relevant, border-security policies and practices need to incorporate the needs of African borderlanders. To this end, there is the need to adopt a broader understanding of security to reflect the complex situation around African borders. Such an approach must bridge the needs of national security and the security of people and communities within the borderlands. Instead of the state being the object of security, a broader conception of security that makes people and communities the center of security is needed.

Emancipatory theory offers an important theoretical paradigm for the study and practice of the complexity of the border security situation in Africa. By making people and communities the object of security, it provides a framework within which the needs of borderlanders and their communities can be effectively integrated into border security. As a means to security, the state and its practices within this framework are better oriented to accommodate the needs of borderlanders. The benefit of this reconceptualization of border security to integrated border management is
that it allows greater attention to African borderlanders. It also helps to recognize the socioeconomic dimension of border management or security; that is, it brings to light the fact that border security is more than physical/military security. Border security involves issues embedded in the socioeconomic lives of borderlanders.

In this reformulation, border agencies will be better equipped to manage borders not just to protect states, but, more importantly, to meet the needs of borderlanders both in procedural and functional dimensions. Emancipatory security holds the potential to enhance our understanding of issues of border management in Africa and practice of border security across the continent.

References


Inclusion of Borderlanders in Border Management in Africa

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