

## Border Disorder: Image Maintenance on the U.S.-Mexico Border

Richard D. Pineda

Peter Andreas. *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000. ix + 152 pages. Notes and index. \$39.95.

Peter Andreas's *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Border* aims to explain the trend of escalating border enforcement in the U.S. Contemporary border policy, described by Andreas, has become a process of image maintenance and symbolic procedure that fails to sufficiently control the U.S.-Mexico border. While policy analysis and critical examination of U.S. border control policy is a constantly topical subject, there is perhaps an even greater need now to understand the process and effect in light of the events of September 11, 2001. Attention has been refocused on the nature of border control not only on the U.S.'s southern border with Mexico, but also on the immense northern border with Canada. Critical reflection on past policy can be instrumental in the creation of new border policy that attempts to deal with the changing geopolitical climate. Socially, the focus on border policy is important as the U.S.-Mexico border becomes an even greater symbol of sovereignty for national leaders and a cultural identifier for those on both sides of the border.

The book is organized into three blocks of analysis: background to border policing; policing and smuggling across the U.S.-Mexico border; and extensions of border policing. The first area provides the necessary background and explanation behind the escalation of border policing and the nature of the political economy of global smuggling. Chapter 1 frames the escalation of border controls in contrast to economic liberalization and in particular in opposition to conventional international relations theory on the diminished importance of borders. In the case of the U.S.-Mexico border, Andreas identifies immigration and drug control as the main areas where U.S. policy makers have

created structural and attitudinal obstacles to a consistent and well-defined border policy.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of smuggling and the contemporary escalation of global smuggling. The border plays an inextricable role in smuggling, particularly as the depth of illegal activity impacts the economy in a more significant fashion. Andreas explains the process and begins his argument against existing border policy by highlighting disparities in illegal weapons smuggling from the U.S. to Mexico and the little discussed U.S. role as a transshipment point for cocaine into Canada. These examples are notable, according to Andreas, because they have significant impact on all of the countries, but rarely receive the same level of attention paid to drug and immigration policy. An important element of this book is media coverage and the effect that such coverage has on border policy formulation and implementation. Andreas casts his concern over smuggling in economic terms, noting that with global economic interdependence, smuggling represents a major element of the global underground economy.

Furthermore, as economies interconnect, the role of the state becomes more intertwined with smuggling, acting as a push and pull for illegal activity. Criminalization of smuggling fuses with pressures caused by economic liberalization, so even as legal structures attempt to crack down on smuggling, economic pressure creates the need for smugglers and the incentive to smuggle as an occupation. This chapter leads into the second part of the book, which focuses specifically on policing and smuggling across the U.S.-Mexico border.

The second section concentrates on a discussion of the clandestine border economy, paired with the escalation of drug and immigration control. The third chapter provides a historical review of the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico vis-à-vis the border and smuggling. The dynamic of this transnational relationship is the diversity of products smuggled across the U.S.-Mexico border including southern cotton to Europe during the civil war, alcohol during Prohibition, and even endangered species, in addition to standard contraband such as drugs. Andreas is careful to explain that the flow of contraband items is a bidirectional process. Again the implication is that as media attention has driven public interest on border issues, the burden for these problems has been laid across the shoulders of Latin American governments, especially the Mexican government. However, examples are presented to emphasize the flow of contraband back and forth across the border. One such example is the milk illegally smuggled from the U.S. into Mexico, which reportedly impacted the Mexican dairy economy in the late 1970s to the tune of over \$400,000 a day.

Andreas catalogs the experiences of migrant smuggling across the U.S.-Mexico border, starting with illegal Chinese migrants in the late 1880s through

the Bracero program of the 1940s and continuing through contemporary times. Again as the details of U.S. legislation against illegal immigration become clear, Andreas is establishing a strong case against existing border policy, which he categorizes as “largely a ritualized performance” (36). A central theme in the book, the interconnected role of the state and smuggling, is reinforced as the author explains the driving demand for cheap labor in the U.S. creating an impetus for increased smuggling. Another central theme, image projection and cultivation, is developed in the third chapter, as drug interdiction along the border is detailed. In the case of drug interdiction much of the U.S.’s war on drugs is historically anchored in efforts to control the border. Unfortunately, as Andreas chronicles, the best efforts of the U.S. and Mexican governments have only served to limit the least effective smugglers while opening the market for larger, more complex organizations.

In Chapter 4, Andreas springboards into an explanation of the escalating drug control policies on the border during the 1990s. Again, through extensive, well-documented research, the nature of border control is framed as ineffectual particularly as policies inadvertently speed up narcotics smuggling across the U.S.-Mexico border. Andreas employs a case study format to examine the Mexican government’s increasing drug control measures, starting with Carlos Salinas’s administration and continuing through the presidency of Ernesto Zedillo. Again, image maintenance is a crucial element of the interaction between government policy and drug smuggling. The exuberance of the U.S. government is reflected in increased economic assistance and political cooperation with Mexico, while concurrent efforts by the Mexican government were aimed at building support for the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other economic programs. While there were advancements in these areas, ultimately the disadvantages have seriously outweighed any tangible, long-term benefits to either country.

Drug interdiction and border control quantified in policy terms is aimed at projecting an appearance of stability and security, according to Andreas (85). Therefore, even as failures and inefficiency plague the U.S. approach to controlling its borders, the appearance of multi-faceted enforcement policies continues unabated. Chapter 5 focuses on the escalation of immigration control and emphasizes the tension between such escalation and the progress of economic integration. Given the push for economic interactions through NAFTA, there are still several financial factors that push illegal immigration, including economic instability in Mexico. The collective push by the U.S. and Mexican governments to create an image of success and vigilance is in spite of the fact that, as Andreas points out, there has never been a claim of diminished immigration or even a formal evaluation of the existing policies. The political

nature of immigration is also discussed in this chapter, particularly as it has evolved into such a major issue in U.S. political discourse. Democrats and Republicans alike have seized on diverse issues related to border policy as agenda issues for regional and national political consideration.

Finally, as Andreas moves into his conclusions, he connects issues relevant to the policing of the U.S.-Mexico border to the situation in the new Europe, with its more open, fluid borders. In order to develop a context for the U.S.'s own increased border controls, Andreas uses Chapter 6 to examine the border issues in the European Union. In particular he compares the external border policies of the EU regarding two of its poorer neighbors, presenting case studies of the German-Polish border and the Spain-Morocco border. These border relationships are presented to show similarities between the situations and also to contrast the E.U. approach and effectiveness to U.S. inefficiency.

Chapter 7 presents a closing analysis that examines the narratives used to create and enforce border policy. Additionally, Andreas presents policy suggestions to help reform border policy and engage in a constructive dialogue to build better borders. His evaluation of these borders is framed to consider both external and internal issues and draws on the range of issues discussed throughout the book. The conclusions also deal with the notion that the border, as geographic space and as symbol, must be envisioned anew in order to prepare and deal effectively with future concerns. In constructing his position, Andreas argues that "escalation of border policing has ultimately been less about deterring the flow of drugs and migrants than about recrafting the image of the border and symbolically reaffirming the state's territorial authority" (x).

Andreas writes for an audience of scholars and practitioners of international politics, political economy, geography, public policy, and communication scholars who study the border as cultural and political text. Communication scholars with a focus on Latina/o studies and Latin American area studies should relish the research presented in Andreas's work, as it opens space for discussion and additional research on border image and social contextualizations. Not only does this help shape the Latin American diaspora in the U.S., but it also plays a significant role in the way Latina/o Americans are framed in contemporary social and political discourse. The book is from a policy expert and aimed at the policy community, thus its application to the communication discipline may seem limited; but the core ideas of symbolic action and image maintenance are connected throughout the book and there are most certainly areas that can connect to the central themes and presentation of issues.

While the book was written before the events of September 11, 2001, the central themes still very much reflect how the U.S. government is dealing with its borders as part of a broader homeland security plan. In this sense Andreas's

work can be a guide to measuring the aptitude of policy makers, especially when assessing whether new policies on “smart borders” create sufficient and effective controls for the management of the U.S.’s borders. Theoretically the work presented in the book is also important as a foundation for post-September 11 research.

The diversity of the potential audience base is a reflection of the clear and defined writing style that Andreas uses throughout the book. In identifying this wide range of potential audiences for the book it is important to consider that the nature of the border really deserves attention from a variety of disciplines working in concert.

*Richard D. Pineda teaches in the Department of Communication Studies at California State University, San Bernardino.*

Copyright of Review of Communication is the property of National Communication Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.