

Evelyne Ritaine

Centre Durkheim, Sciences Po Bordeaux

FROM ONE WALL TO NUMEROUS WALLS IN A
GLOBALIZED WORLD : A COMPARATIVE POLITICS APPROACH

Presentation to the symposium "In the Shadow of Separation : Territorial Regimes and New Socio-economic Practices", 23-25 november 2010, organized by Consulat Général de France in Jerusalem and Al-Quds University, Jerusalem.

The task I have undertaken in my presentation is a little strange, since I will deal with various walls existing in the world, here "in the shadow of separation"...

So, I would like to briefly present my research experience so that you can understand how and why I got interested in contemporary walls. For many years, I have investigated the field of migration issues, especially in Southern Europe. As you know, these issues in the European Union are animated by a double political movement. An inclusive movement refers to migrant social and political integration, which brings along a whole set of problems. An exclusive movement refers to the political will to sort out from one another those who wish to enter the European space : we should keep in mind that European borders have heavily been armored, these past years.

This observation brings me to the awareness of the multiplication of walls in a globalised world, which would be, in the ideology of liberalism, a world of free movement for goods, capital and also for people. But in reality, walls are always erected against people.

From a European and democratic point of view not only is this contemporary walls proliferation startling, but it also triggers an ethical issue. Therefore, I am currently trying to think about the political

background and the political effects of these walls in a globalized world. And I define all these political aspects as *wall politics*.

Before proceeding further, let me clarify a few points.

First, a wall can never legitimate another wall. For me, this goes without saying, and I hope this statement will prevent us from unnecessary discussions, which are nowadays so popular in the mass media.

Second, I won't deal much with the Israeli wall, because I came here to learn from your research ; but I hope my talk will open onto comparative and stimulating perspectives on your part.

Third, I would like to give a definition of the core notion of my research, namely "wall politics". I use this term as defined by M. Foucault, i.e. as a *political device*, in which all the dimensions have to be analysed as a whole. Subsequently, I investigate the wall political device, which is made up of complex technologies, police or private control practices, territory access laws, professional and political speeches about boundary "securitization" (*slide 3*).

I wish to insist on the neologism "securitization" : in the Copenhagen school of International Relations (O.Waever), an constructivist one, securitization means that the political construction of public issues is systematically turned into a security stake. For instance, the American wall is said to have been built against clandestine migrants and drugs smugglers ; in fact it's a political answer to those who are afraid of identity crisis and of "Spanishation" within the US society.

The first step of my presentation is an analytical framework of the various contemporary wall politics. Here "contemporary" is a decisive adjective. I take into account only post Cold War walls, and I theorize that their political logic is radically new. They are not fortifications against invasions, the way historical walls were. They are not obstacles to prevent citizens from leaving, which was the case of the Berlin wall ; they are

attempts at locking undesirable people out (this *oxymoron* to quote Z. Bauman).

The second step is an interpretation of the asymmetric political space created by wall politics. I try to analyse how the dissymmetry of economic and political power is turned into asymmetric strategic capabilities, according to the side of the wall you find yourself on.

1- ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF CONTEMPORARY WALLS :

(slide 1)

Here, "wall" is a generic term applied to any kind of armoured boundary, whatever the technologies used.

At this point, my goal is to see if, by comparing all types of walls, we can understand wall politics differently. This slide is a temporary overview of the contemporary walls. The numerous wall-building projects that have not yet been attested are not taken into account in my diagram.

As you can see on the slide, wall politics are caught in-between the tensions emanating from 3 types of securitization : homeland securitization, social securitization, military securitization. Even if these walls belong to one category more than another, none of them really belongs to a pure category : they are related to variable securitization types, depending on the political given context. For instance, since 9/11, the American wall has reinforced its sense of military securitization.

Let us consider each case in turn.

1-1- The most frequent and expanding cases are armored borders.

In these cases, there shouldn't be any problem of sovereignty : the armoured boundary is an official line, an international border. However, a question of sovereignty arises as soon as we think about the restricted freedom of

movement regarding the outside people. Usually, during peacetime, the border policies should be bilateral, and not unilateral : for instance, Mexico has hardly protested against the US wall, which is imposed to it ; but this unilateralism is not possible with a powerful state, like Canada, where the border watching is named "smart border", not wall !

The main political issues in these cases are the wall dysfunctional effects in neighbourhood relationships, especially when free trade or economic cooperation agreements exist : P. Andreas, an expert of the US border, talks about "a borderless economy, a barricaded border" (NAFTA, economic cooperation between Australia and Asian states, economic exchanges between EU and Southern states like Morocco, etc.).

As you can see, on the diagram, on the right column about armoured borders, some cases are directly connected with war situation and consequently with military securitization. In these cases, the armed forces have the main competence, whereas the border guards have it during peacetime.

1-2- On the contrary, compared with these first cases, the cases of contested and consequently armored ceasefire lines are directly related to sovereignty stakes.

First, the territorial line which is armoured is a temporary and contested one : numerous protests are connected to this point (as you well know!).

Second, in these cases, there always are forced population displacements, refugee issues, territorial and political claims.

Third, the legal nature of the two territories is unequal, namely a recognized state on the one hand, and uncertain status territories on the other. On this part of the slide, we may wonder how to refer to these closed territories : a geographical and neutral designation as seen on the slide, or a *Palestinian*

State, a Saharawi Republic, a Cashmere State ? This semantic uncertainty highlights the main sovereignty stake.

1-3- The cases of military urbanism are built by foreign armed forces to separate hostile communities from one another (Sunnis from Shiites in Bagdad ; Catholics from Protestants in Belfast, etc.), or to protect themselves within some sort of military gated communities (the Green Zone in Bagdad).

1-4- As opposed to what we might think at first, the cases of security urbanism are not that far from the other cases. In fact, they are based on a police and military concept, called, in urbanism theory, "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design", or CPTED. It makes use of all the security military technologies and speaks of "reinforcement of targets" (I refer to the classical "Fortress America", of E.J. Blakely and M. G. Snyder). The main difference is the qualification of the actor who owns the decision-making power : generally it's a private one, that is a private owner or a building contractor. But as you know, some gated communities claim self-governance, in California for instance, and urban enclaves are substitutes for missing law and order forces, like in Latin America. As a matter of fact, these cases are connected with the other cases, and are as politically oriented as the others.

Here is a very interesting point : the Israeli settlements and territorial designs to control the Palestinian society in the West-Bank seem to be a sui generis category, i.e. halfway between security urbanism and military urbanism.

This specific category, and also the high number of times Israel is mentioned on the diagram, lead us, through this comparative approach, to two well-known analyses, namely, one the analysis of an Israeli "matrix of

control" (to quote J. Halper), and two the analysis of a strategy of separation through (to quote E. Weizman) "two territorial networks overlapping across the same area in three dimensions".

Let us see now if we can have, in a second time, an interpretation of the asymmetric political space created by wall politics.

2- INTERPRETATION OF THE ASYMMETRIC POLITICAL SPACE CREATED BY WALL POLITICS : *(slide 2, 3)*

- Wall politics is a hyper-modern politics : it's an asymmetric response to the perception of a supposed asymmetric risk, in our globalized world and in our asymmetric geopolitics. Its process is based on the anticipation of threat. Its main purpose is to sort out suspected groups from other people. This process heavily endangers freedom on the "wrong" side of the wall. From there, the freedom of movement of a Senegalese or Mexican citizen is very restricted as compared to that of a Schengen space citizen. Not because all these citizens are suspects, but because they have to be sorted out in the first place. It's a new form of inequality caused by the globalization process.

- Wall politics is also politically constructed (*slide 3*). Because they are facing uncertainties about collective identities and societal issues, politicians construct otherness and contiguity as risks. The legitimization is a struggle against clandestine migrants, smugglers, terrorists, but the real issue is the reinforcement of social and political cohesion for the insiders.

This political construction leads, everywhere in the world, to very dramatic technological solutions, whose efficiency is not guaranteed, but whose political effect is popular. We have to keep in mind its monumental aspects

such as walls and barriers, checkpoints and barbed wire fences, watching towers and drones, and so on, even in peace times.

- The main consequence of such politics is the creation of a very asymmetric political space (*slide 2*). One side of the wall owns the very decisive power to define the situation, via decision making power (to build a barrier), via power of control (to sort out people), via power of categorization (to define the inside/the outside, identity/otherness, security/risk, etc.). For this side, this politics corresponds to high-performance politics, which strengthens the sense of community and gives assets during electoral competition.

It's important to say that the other side of the wall only possesses reactive political capabilities. People can only accept restrictions and bypass rules, or organize a political protest movement.

Here a return to the specificity of the Palestinian situation is possible (and this matters for the others cases of contested ceasefire lines). The fact that these people are assigned to remain "outside" constitutes a perfect vicious circle : people live on their homeland territory BUT they are locked outside in a political sense : they find themselves in a political outside, without real sovereignty and without a real State. Definitely the wall is, in every meaning of the word, a sovereignty issue.