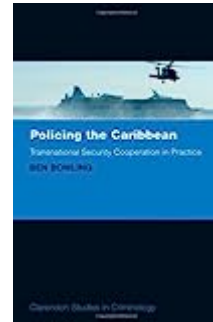


Ben Bowling. *Policing the Caribbean: Transnational Security Cooperation in Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 376 S. \$132.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-957769-9.



Reviewed by Nicholas Dietrich

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (December, 2013)

B. Bowling: Policing the Caribbean

In his monograph Ben Bowling, a Professor of criminology at King's College London, extends his interest in the globalisation of policing to the regional security landscape of the Caribbean. According to Bowling, transnational policing is one of the most significant changes in the organisation of security in the Caribbean and other parts of the world (p. v) and he thus, through means of a detailed case study, attempts to explore the extension of police practices across the boundaries of the nation state (p.v).

In his introduction Bowling places the current surge in cross-border law enforcement cooperation in the ambit of a new security agenda which sees the intersection of three broader themes that converge around the problematic term of 'globalisation'. He firstly describes the more recent post-Cold War emergence of a security discourse that elevates 'less institutionalised transnational threats' (p. 3) to a 'global' or 'human' security agenda, where threat perceptions based on principles of military invasion are being re-conceptualised to include social, environmental, economic and criminal dimensions (p. 32). Following from this is what he calls a 'new

orthodoxy among law enforcement professionals' that regards transnational law enforcement as the only measure to fight 'the globalisation of crime' (p. 6). Finally, he hints at the shifting sands under the feet of practitioners in disciplines traditionally bound by subject and tradition, such as Criminology and International Relations (IR). Thus, the observed blurring of boundaries between internal/external security that have been built on the dominance of the nation state in both policy and academic imaginations is simultaneously reflected in an increased need for interdisciplinary reflection in the study of social order (p. 31) as well as the production of discourses of 'newness' that facilitate the expansion of the concept of 'security'.

The author makes a solid effort to contextualise the geographic and political economic factors that have shaped the Caribbean security situation over time. In his 'brief introduction to the Caribbean' (chapter 2) he accentuates the importance of geography to understanding the convergence of licit and illicit activities where land and sea have played an intricate role in shaping the terrain traversed by actors attempting to use the terri-

tory to their own advantage. Human security challenges that currently plague the region are shown to be intricately intertwined with the many human interests, activities and ultimately livelihood strategies that meet in an important node where regional and transcontinental flows have been converging over hundreds of years. The shifting geopolitical boundaries across periods of colonisation, nationalisation and regionalisation, the sustained role that metropolitan powers such as Britain and Canada have played in the region, and the eventual US hegemony during and after the Cold War are thus important so as to understand the current Caribbean security context. It is through his brief historical investigation into the colonial and post-colonial legacies of British policing that Bowling comes to the revelation that 'the existence of historically embedded policing networks across the islands means that the question becomes one of explaining transnationalisation as a transformative rather than an entirely new phenomenon' (p. 73).

This historical insight is something that Bowling does not investigate further but which has an impact on his persistent focus on extraterritorial law enforcement interests in the region. His main focus is on describing contemporary entanglements across borders as well as between agencies traditionally seen as operating in separate spheres, such as the police, defence force, customs, coast guard and immigration. He goes to work by weaving a narrative that seeks to patch together the different spatial scales that must be taken into account when approaching the complex world which he explores (p. 9). His socio-spatial typology of transnational policing is of interest as it attempts to delineate different levels (global, regional, international, transnational and local) across which networks of actors and activities converge, and could act as a tool to be replicated in different contexts.

Unfortunately, due to the focus on more traditional security actors related to the nation state, there is a gap in analysis regarding the role of non-state actors in the broader realm of transnational security production and crime regulation. Although they are present in analyses such as that of airport security (p. 182), it would have been interesting if the author more directly pondered on where state-based policing practices and non-state policing functions intersect and how this eventually relates to policing as 'an expression of national sovereignty' (p. 292).

That said, in a language accessible to the broader academic and policy community interested in issues of re-

gionalism, globalisation, transnationalism and security, Bowling offers a study that synthesises relevant academic literature of the day with a rich dose of empirical observation, including '80 tape-recorded interviews and the same number again where circumstances didn't permit taping' (p. 13). He brings to light not only the complex processes, strategies and initiatives that emerge across scales of cross-border police cooperation, but endeavours to relate his findings to issues of accountability and responsibility by maintaining a critical stand point in relation to 'securitisation' and always attempting to reflect on the responsibility of law enforcement to protect and serve the communities that fall under their jurisdiction (chapter 10).

The book is structured so as to give the reader a broad introduction into the multiple sites, actors and networks that make up the complex reality of regional and transatlantic policing as it takes form in the Caribbean region, with chapters focusing on: the regional Caribbean police commissioners; reactive and proactive investigation on the ground; the role of the military in transnational policing; border protection through customs, immigration and airport security; maritime policing; and overseas liaison officers. It is in the broad scope of both the geographic area and area of study that some readers might be critical of the author's practical decision to focus on general patterns in the Anglophone Caribbean and his emphasis on US and British relationships with the countries in this region. On the other hand, the book opens up an area of study that offers many scholars the opportunity to fill in the gaps and connect the dots that move beyond linguistic and geographic boundaries.

As one of the first full-length studies of its kind to tackle such topics by looking beyond the United States and Europe for lessons on how regional, international and transnational security cooperation is being produced, it is a valuable contribution towards understanding these topics beyond a Western experience. While Bowling's critical lens highlights the power politics present in the realms of transnational criminal justice, where powerful external actors such as the United States, Britain and Interpol attempt to exert their influence extraterritorially, his focus on police chiefs to liaison officers brings some significant actors and stakeholders to the fore that have not previously been given much attention in IR literature.

Finally, through his focus on the 'globalisation of policing', Bowling offers an interesting insight into the dynamics of globalization beyond the experiences of the

licit and illicit movement of objects across borders. While he is sensitive to the problematic issues faced by populations that are subject to changing security landscapes, he simultaneously gives voice to those many police professionals who must negotiate their positions in the security landscapes that they populate. It becomes evident that both formal and informal contact and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and their personnel have interesting outcomes not noticed when one only focuses on international security from a macro perspective: *Transnational Police* â| have learned specific skills such as the ability to work with people from other nationalities and within contrasting and sometimes conflicting legal systems. They have skills in diplomacy, leadership, influencing people beyond their formal authority and increative problem solving (p. 290)

A refreshing aspect of Bowling's broader theme is that, while he builds his study on the very literature that describes the overarching de-territorialising effects of globalisation (pp. 34-36), his study, even if he may not

be aware of it, can be seen as a rare investigation into what one may term the politics and practicalities of re-territorialisation, as existing boundaries and jurisdictions based on sovereign state territoriality are renegotiated in a myriad of ways by actors who are simultaneously responsible for protecting those boundaries and extending activities beyond them.

What this book shows the reader is that whether âtransnational policingâ is new, old or transformative in nature, an interdisciplinary effort is required to keep pace with the complexity of this growing subject area. Although not everything can be covered in one book of 350 pages, this work offers an accessible introduction into the shifting terrain of both law enforcement and the academic study of policing. Depending on how one reads it, Bowling provides a welcome insight into the many actors that are engaged in the active renegotiation of sovereignty, authority and jurisdiction (chapter 9) surrounding one of the most cherished institutions of the nation state, the police.

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Citation: Nicholas Dietrich. Review of Bowling, Ben, *Policing the Caribbean: Transnational Security Cooperation in Practice*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. December, 2013.

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