BUILDING WALLS

Fear and securitization in the European Union

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Authors: Ainhoa Ruiz Benedicto · Pere Brunet

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On November 9th 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, marking what many hoped would be a new era of cooperation and openness across borders. German President Horst Koehler celebrating its demise spoke of an 'edifice of fear' replaced by a 'place of joy', opening up the possibility of a 'cooperative global governance which benefits everyone'. 30 years later, the opposite seems to have happened. Edifices of fear, both real and imaginary, are being constructed everywhere fuelling a rise in xenophobia and creating a far more dangerous walled world for refugees fleeing for safety.

This report reveals that member states of the European Union and the Schenghen area have constructed almost 1000 km of walls, the equivalent of more than six times the total length of the Berlin Walls,[1] since the nineties to prevent displaced people migrating into Europe. These physical walls are accompanied by even longer 'maritime walls', naval operations patrolling the Mediterranean, as well as 'virtual walls', border control systems that seek to stop people entering or even travelling within Europe, and control movement of population. Europe has turned itself in the process into a fortress excluding those outside– and in the process also increased its use of surveillance and militarised technologies that has implications for its citizens within the walls.

This report seeks to study and analyse the scope of the fortification of Europe as well as the ideas and narratives upon which it is built. This report examines the walls of fear stoked by xenophobic parties that have grown in popularity and exercise an undue influence on European policy. It also examines how the European response has been shaped in the context of post-9/11 by an expanded security paradigm, based on the securitization of social issues. This has transformed Europe's policies from a more social agenda to one centred on security, in which migrations and the movements of people are considered as threats to state security. As a consequence, they are approached with the traditional security tools: militarism, control, and surveillance.

Europe's response is unfortunately not an isolated one. States around the world are answering the biggest global security problems through walls, militarisation, and isolation from other states and the rest of the world. This has created an increasingly hostile world for people fleeing from war and political prosecution.

The foundations of "Fortress Europe" go back to the Schengen Agreement in 1985, that while establishing freedom of movement within EU borders, demanded more control of its external borders. This model established the idea of a safe interior and an unsafe exterior.

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1.   The Berlin Wall was composed of a wall of 45 km at East Berlin plus 115 km at West Berlin.

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Successive European security strategies after 2003, based on America's "Homeland Security" model, turned the border into an element that connects local and global security. As a result, the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) became increasingly militarised, and migration was increasingly viewed as a threat.

Fortress Europe was further expanded with policy of externalization of the border management to third countries in which agreements have been signed with neighbouring countries to boost border control and accept deported migrants. The border has thus been transformed into a bigger and wider geographical concept.

THE WALLS AND BARRIERS TO THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS

■ The investigation estimates that the member states of the European Union and the Schengen area have constructed almost 1000 km of walls on their borders since the nineties, to prevent the entrance of displaced people and migration into their territory.

■ The practice of building walls has grown immensely, from 2 walls in the decade of the 1990s to 15 in 2017. 2015 saw the largest increase, the number of walls grew from 5 to 12.

■ 10 out of 28 member states (Spain, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, Austria, Slovenia, the UK, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania) have built walls on their borders to prevent immigration, all of them belonging to the Schengen area except for Bulgaria and the United Kingdom.

■ One country that is not a member of the European Union but belongs to the Schengen area has built a wall to prevent migration (Norway). Another (Slovakia) has built internal walls for racial segregation. A total of 13 walls have been built on EU borders or inside the Schengen area.[2]

■ Two countries, both members of the European Union and the Schengen area, (Spain and Hungary) have built two walls on their borders to control migration. Another two (Austria and the United Kingdom) have built walls on their shared borders with Schengen countries (Slovenia and France respectively). A country outside of the European Union, but part of the so-called Balkan route (Macedonia), has built a wall to prevent migration.

■ Internal controls of the Schengen area, regulated and normalized by the Schengen Borders Code of 2006, have been gone from being an exception to be the political norm, justified on the grounds of migration control and political events (such as political summit, large demonstrations or high profile visitors to a country). From only 3 internal controls in 2006, there were

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2. The walls on Cyprus and Northern Ireland were built previous to the period under study.

20 in 2017, which indicates the expansion in restrictions and monitoring of peoples' movements.

■ The maritime environment, particularly the Mediterranean, provides more barriers. The analysis shows that of the 8 main EU maritime operations (Mare Nostrum, Poseidon, Hera, Andale, Minerva, Hermes, Triton and Sophia) none have an exclusive mandate of rescuing people. All of them have had, or have, the general objective of fighting crime in border areas. Only one of them (Mare Nostrum) included humanitarian organisations in its fleet, but was replaced by Frontex's "Triton" Operation (2013-2015) which had an increased focus on prosecuting border-related crimes. Another operation (Sophia) included direct collaboration with a military organization (NATO) with a mandate focused on the persecution of persons that transport people on migratory routes. Analysis of these operations show that their treatment of crimes is sometimes similar to their treatment of refugees, framed as issues of security and treating refugees as threats.

■ There are also growing numbers of 'virtual walls' which seek to control, monitor and surveil people's movements. This has resulted in the expansion, especially since 2013, of various programs to restrict people's movement (VIS, SIS II, RTP, ETIAS, SLTD and I-Checkit) and collect biometric data. The collected data of these systems are stored in the EURODAC database, which allows analysis to establish guidelines and patterns on our movements. EUROSUR is deployed as the surveillance system for border areas.

FRONTEX: THE WALLS' BORDERGUARDS

■ The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) plays an important role in this whole process of fortress expansion and also acts and establishes coordination with third countries by its joint operation Coordination Points. Its budgets have soared in this period, growing from 6.2 million in 2005 to 302 million in 2017.

■ An analysis of Frontex budget data shows a growing involvement in deportation operations, whose budgets have grown from 80,000 euros in 2005 to 53 million euros in 2017.

■ The European Agency for the Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) deportations often violate the rights of asylum-seeking persons. Through Frontex's agreements with third countries, asylum-seekers end up in states that violate human rights, have weak democracies, or score badly in terms of human development (HDI).

WALLS OF FEAR AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAR-RIGHT

■ The far-right have manipulated public opinion to create irrational fears of refugees. This xenophobia sets up mental walls in people, who then demand physical walls. The analysed data shows a worrying rise in racist opinions in recent years, which has increased the percentage of votes to European parties with a xenophobic ideology, and facilitated their growing political influence.

■ In 28 EU member states, there are 39 political parties classified as extreme right populists that at some point of their history have had at least one parliamentary seat (in the national Parliament or in the European Parliament). At the completion of this report (July 2018), 10 member states (Germany, Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Netherlands, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Sweden) have xenophobic parties with a strong presence, which have obtained more than half a million votes in elections since 2010. With the exception of Finland, these parties have increased their representation. In some cases, like those in Germany, Italy, Poland and Sweden, there has been an alarming increase, such as Alternative for Germany (AfD) winning 94 seats in the 2017 elections (a party that did not have parliamentary representation in the 2013 elections), the Law and Justice party (PiS) in Poland winning 235 seats after the 2015 elections (an increase of 49%), and Lega Nord's (LN) strong growth in Italy, which went from 18 seats in 2013 to 124 seats in 2018.

■ Our study concludes that, in 9 of these 10 states, extreme right-wing parties have a high degree of influence on the government's migration policies, even when they are a minority party. In 4 of them (Austria, Finland, Italy and Poland) these parties have ministers in the government. In 5 of the remaining 6 countries (Germany, Denmark, Holland, Hungary, and Sweden), there has been an increase of xenophobic discourse and influence. Even centrist parties seem happy to deploy the discourse of xenophobic parties to capture a sector of their voters rather than confront their ideology and advance an alternative discourse based on people's rights. In this way, the positions of the most radical and racist parties are amplified with hardly any effort. In short, our study confirms the rise and influence of the extreme-right in European migration policy which has resulted in the securitization and criminalization of migration and the movements of people.

The mental walls of fear are inextricably connected to the physical walls. Racism and xenophobia legitimise violence in the border area Europe. These ideas reinforce the collective imagination of a safe "interior" and an insecure "outside", going back to the medieval concept of the fortress. They also strengthen territorial power dynamics, where the origin of a person, among other factors, determines her freedom of movement.

In this way, in Europe, structures and discourses of violence have been built up, diverting us from policies that defend human rights, coexistence and equality, or more equal relationships between territories.

CONCLUSIONS

The countries of the European Union are dealing with the movements of forcibly displaced persons and migratory flows by constructing walls, locking down borders, surveilling, monitoring and stopping people's movements.

All these policies have been legitimised and reinforced by a rise in xenophobic and racist policies, consolidating the structural violence treats people as illegal and a threat to our security.

Instead of focusing on humanitarian methods of dealing with large flows of migrants and addressing structural problems of global violence and economic inequality, they have chosen to build social, political, and physical walls arguing that this will prevent insecurity and terror in European territories.

The result has been the consolidation of a fortress Europe made up of reinforced external borders and the construction of physical and virtual walls across Europe and its surrounding countries. It is a fortress built on the structures of racism and inequality, where movement is treated as suspicious and where the "other" constitutes a threat. It is a disturbing trend and one that in the current political environment looks to be unstoppable. However it is worthwhile remembering that just over 30 years ago, the Berlin Wall seemed similarly permanent and intransigent. Yet a popular mass movement rose out of nowhere, brought the wall crashing down and ended decades of communist rule. A similar movement is needed now to bring down the walls of this era. Walls may be easy and politically expedient to build, but a future for Europe based on walls is ultimately an inhumane and bleak future serving the interests of only a rich few. We need a hopeful future in which no-one is illegal and in which resources are equitably shared.

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