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## Border Strikes Back: New Walls in Geopolitics

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### **Abstract:**

*The dream of a world without borders is almost a reality. There are no borders for communications, for trade, for art or culture. Governments keeps talking about the disappearance of borders but we must recognize the permanence of them and especially their solidification Since 11 September 2001, fences, walls and borders have become an object and policy instrument. Borders are making a comeback. Europe will soon have more physical barriers on its national borders than it did during the cold war. Today there is about 35000 - 40000 km of closed borders or borders which closure is planned. It represents about 15% of global borders. The phenomenon is of such magnitude that it has spawned a real economy of the walls. The walled borders return in a global scale and it is necessary to measure its impact on international relations.*

**Keywords:** Wall, walled borders, militarization of borders, geopolitics of walls

### **1. Introduction**

The idea of free movement of people, goods and services in a market without government regulation is the foundation of globalization. The creation of the Schengen area abolished the borders within Europe. European citizens now may come and go as they please. Thanks to the Internet, the World Wide Web, information flows have no frontierseither. The dream of a world without borders is almost a reality. There are no borders for communications, for trade, for art or culture. (GAGNÉ, 2014).

Governments keeps talking about the disappearance of borders but we must recognize the permanence of them and especially their solidification. Beyond the discourse of politicians and big business leaders, the globalization is accompanied by a rise of limitations. (FOUCHER, 2007).

Since 11 September 2001, fences, walls and borders have become an object and policy instrument. (RGUIG, 2016). Conflicts are becoming boundless. Terrorism and refugee's crisis are now a main concern in global policy. Countries needs to collaborate at an international stage level, but at the same time countries are closing and reinforcing borders worldwide. Borders are making a comeback.

Since the fall of berlin wall over 40 countries worldwide have erected fences or walls against more than 60 of their neighbors. With 15 new walls built in 2015. (MUNICH SECURITY REPORT, 2016. P 5). Europe will soon have more physical barriers on its national borders than it did during the cold war (DATA TEAM, 2016). Today there is about 35000 - 40000 km of closed borders or borders which closure is planned. It represents about 15% of global borders (CHANTAL, 2015).

The phenomenon is of such magnitude that it has spawned a real economy of the walls. The military border market in 2011 is nearly 17 billion dollars worldwide, without counting the costs of maintenance. (CHANTAL, 2015).

Border strikes back. The walled borders return in a global scale and it is necessary to measure its impact on international relations.

First, let's have a look at walled borders worldwide.

### **2. In Africa**

In 2003, Botswana has established an electric fence 500 kilometers along its border with Zimbabwe, using health arguments. The barrier between Zimbabwe and South Africa (and Mozambique) erected along the Kruger Park is still partially there, despite the Treaty of 9 December 2002 which provided for its destruction. On the other hand, Morocco, which has gradually built since 1981 a sand wall in the Sahara to isolate the guerrillas of the Polisario Front, sees its territory crisscrossed by two first barriers erected in 1998 and tripled after 2005 around the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta to stem the migratory hemorrhage. And recently, a barrier was just build in the border with Algeria.

### **3. In Asia**

From 2005, the sultanate of Brunei has built a security fence along its border with Limbang district in East Malaysia (based on smuggling and immigration issues). China, which has already implemented subnational barriers (with Guangdong Province and the regions of Hong Kong and Macao), erected in October 2006a security barrier made of concrete pillars and barbed wire with North

Korea. In South Asia, it is for security reasons (prevent the infiltration of Islamist groups) that in 2001 Thailand and Malaysia have agreed to set up a concrete wall along its border to curb the trafficking of all kinds. In central Asia, for similar reasons, Uzbekistan, based on a territorial dispute, raised a barbed wire fence along its border with neighboring Kyrgyzstan and announced in 2009 (after Islamic Jihad attacks against forces Uzbek) the construction, in the Fergana valley, of a wall of seven meters high. India built three safety barriers, the first to isolate Kashmir from Pakistan, the second round of Bangladesh to limit smuggling, immigration and the terrorism, and the third along its border with China.

#### **4. In Middle-East**

In the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates is currently building a security fence along its border with the territory of Oman. The wall built after the first Gulf War of 1991 by the Kuwaiti emirate to avoid that Iraq is attempting to invade again is coupled with a second barrier from 2004. Saudi Arabia for its part, began the construction of a security fence along its border with Iraq since 2006. A construction of a similar fortification along its border with Yemen has begun in 2004 and accelerated in 2009. Iran, two years after opening in 2007 the erection of a wall three meters high along its borders with Pakistan (officially for reasons of smuggling, reportedly for security reasons), announced its will erect a concrete wall along its border with Afghanistan. A similar building is planned with Turkey. In December 2005, Israel suggested to Egypt to restore the old fence that separated them in the Sinai desert. Also, in 2009, Egypt has undertaken the rise of an underground metal wall 18 meters deep along the 11 kilometers of the Gaza Strip to block the tunnels that cross the border illegally. In March 2010, Israeli said the construction of a discontinuous wall (barrier technology, radars or simple signs marking the border in less accessible areas) on 240 km of border with Egypt. In the West Bank, Israel continues to extend the wall on either side of the famous "Green Line" of 1967. Finally, in January 2012, the Israeli government announced the construction of new fences along the Jordanian border and Lebanon.

#### **5. In Europe**

Since 1908, Spain has also built a barrier in the neutral territory of Gibraltar (to isolate the British portion of the rest of Spain). Announced in 2011 by Greece and Bulgaria, the realization of security walls along their borders with Turkey to block illegal immigration flows and for health reasons. In 2015 Hungary began construction of a fence of 4 meters high along the 175 km of its border with Serbia to stop the arrival of migrants. (HONORÉ, 2015). After Hungary, Austria is closing its border too. The country has decided to build a barrier along its border with Slovenia, also a member of the European Union, to control the flow of migrants on its soil. (LCI TFI, 2015). Ukraine began sealing off its border with Russia in 2014. Baltic states announced they are following suit. That would leave Belarus's the only unsealed border between the Baltic and the black sea (DATA TEAM, 2016).

#### **6. In America**

Brazil has built huge concrete walls (up to 10 feet) serving as "eco-barriers" to contain urban sprawl. Officials see it as a way to protect the forest but critics maintain that it's a strategy for walling in and containing the city's favelas (slums). In contrast to Pledges of Lowering barriers for Mercosur junior members (Paraguay and Uruguay), Brazil confirmed the building of a steel and concrete wall along the Paraguayan border to help in the fight against smuggling in the Triple Frontier Area Where Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay meet. The United States continues building the barrier of 930 km that already separates Mexico, although the Obama administration has decided to suspend, in March 2010, the program "virtual border", too expensive.

The territorial Fortification is a major prerogative of the authorities, defining the political power of a state. Ancient empires (Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall), lordships and cities of the Middle Ages (Fortifications), Modern states (Maginot line, Siegfried line), transnational military blocs (the Atlantic Wall, Berlin Wall) used a wall or fortification to protect their borders and draw the limits of their authoritativeness. (RITAINE, 2009).

The wall on the border is, first of all a matter of security. The wall marks an inward-looking attitude, a reflex, a safety instinct that states build. The wall is a rapid response instrument deemed elusive threats. Mostly, building a wall on its border is an answer to the problems affecting the different states directly as illegal immigration, a fight against smuggling and terrorism and a fight against drug trafficking. (RGUIG, 2016).

#### **7. The Migration Flows Control**

A walled border is not only a way to face threats or prevent people from entering its territory. The wall is primarily a means of control. Wall is not there to hinder; it also aims to allow checkpoints to fully exercise its oversight function. (RITAINE, 2009, P16). Wall and control are a global system that is exerted on the movement of people (RITAINE, 2009 P 16). Since the 9/11 and crisis in Iraq, Libya and Syria States are building walls on their border to face the refugees flow. The Berlin Wall was built to prevent people from leaving. The walls of today are designed to prevent people from entering (CHANTAL, 2015), and be able to control who is allow to enter. In Hungary, the number of asylum seekers has increased by 126% between 2013 and 2014. (HONORÉ, 2015). As a response, Hungary began the construction of the wall in 2015. FRONTEX from French "Frontières Extérieures" for external borders is a European agency for the Management of operational cooperation at the external borders of the Union member states. It was created in 2004 by the European Union and aims to reduce illegal migration sub-Saharan Africa to destination of Europe. His budget raised from 6 million euros in 2005 to 84 million in 2009 (CHANTAL, 2015). Frontex is based on African northern states and support the monitoring of maritime and land borders and the creation of refugee camps to prevent migrants to set foot in Europe

Walled borders are not only rising on the ground. The main goal of FRONTEX is to also to monitor what's happening in the seas. The "liquid walls" appeared mostly to control illegal migration flow. Since its creation, Frontex has conducted numerous operations in the Mediterranean Sea:

Operation Hermes: After Italy asked for frontier surveillance of Mediterranean Sea between Italy and north Africa. 2011.

Operation Triton: focuses on border security within 30 nautical miles of the Italian shore. 2014.

Operation Moria hotspot: Greece was mandated by Frontex to monitor the newly found asylum seeker reception center in Moria, Lesbos. 2015.

Operation Poseidon: Surveillance of the country's sea and land borders between Greece and Turkey. 2006.

In Europe, we can also name the SIVE system, from Spanish "Sistema Integrado de vigilancia Exterior" for Integrated External Surveillance System. SIVE surrounds the Spanish and Portuguese coasts. It's a sophisticated detection system, combined with air and sea patrols to intercept migrants and smugglers from Maghreb. (PARIZOT, 2015). This is not new. Evelyn Ritaine underlined it a few years ago (RITAINE, 2012, p. 6) that in the Mediterranean, as elsewhere, the question of control of the border is largely reduced to that of immigration control, and the term almost always correlated to risk illegal immigration problem.

The same thing is happening in all over the world. Todd Miller detailed the Washington's response to the 2010 Haitian earthquake providing one example of how quickly a mobile U.S. border and associated fears of massive immigration or unrest can be brought into play (MILLER, 2013):

- In the first days after that disaster, a U.S. Air Force cargo plane circled parts of the island for five hours repeatedly broadcasting in Creole the prerecorded voice of Raymond Joseph, Haiti's ambassador to the United States.
- "Listen, don't rush [to the United States] on boats to leave the country," he said. "If you do that, we'll all have even worse problems. Because I'll be honest with you: if you think you will reach the U.S. and all the doors will be wide open to you, that's not at all the case. And they will intercept you right on the water and send you back home where you came from."
- That disembodied voice from the heavens was addressing Haitians still stunned in the wake of an earthquake that had killed up to 316,000 people and left an additional one million homeless. State Department Deputy Spokesman Gordon Duguid explained the daily flights to CNN this way: "We are sending public service messages... to save lives." Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) quickly dispatched 16 Coast Guard cutters to patrol Haitian waters, blocking people from leaving their devastated island. DHS authorities also cleared space in a 600-bed immigration detention center in Miami, and at the for-profit Guantanamo Bay Migrations Operation Center (run by the GEO Group) at the infamous U.S. base in Cuba.
- In other words, the U.S. border is no longer static and "homeland security" no longer stays in the homeland: it's mobile, it's rapid, and it's international.

Walls and walled border are growing everywhere all over the globe and those that its effectiveness remains to be demonstrated. Many voices are raising to denounce the high cost of the walls for results far from expectations.

The real utility of a wall is very limited in time. These "grids", as say Rguig, seem useful in a limited time. The Moroccan Sahara, the defense wall forced the militia of the Polisario Front to renounce their military operations extortion on cities. The implementation of an electrified fence on the border between Jammu and Kashmir and Azad Kashmir attended the Indian authorities to block the infiltration of jihadi elements from Pakistan. Increasing the height and fortifying the barrier at Melilla and Ceuta, the Spanish authorities have arrested nearly Saharan migration to these enclaves, and protected for a time the demographic balance of the two cities. (RGUIG, 2016). On the long term, walls and walled borders changed migration flows but does not stop it. When Greece ended his wall over part of its border with Turkey in 2012, the migrants went to Bulgaria, which in turn initiates the construction of a wall in 2014 (LCI TF1, 2015)

So, why spend so much money to build ineffective walls, to monitor seas, to hunt for migrants when reports show that the majority of migrants surrender themselves to authorities? Because waiting and expecting migrants will give the signal that nobody is doing anything to fight against their arrival. The walled border is not only a way to control migration flow or to fight terrorism. It's also a psychological instrument on citizens. The wall is used for political purposes. (Del BIAGGIO, 2015). The wall has a hypothetical efficiency, so building a walled border is mostly a public relations operation. (RGUIG, 2016).

### **8. Walls: a will of the Powerful at the Expense of its Weaker Neighbors**

The wall also means a strong economic asymmetry / income gaps. (RITAINE, 2009, P20). A wall marks a significant imbalance and distrust, like walls in the West Bank and Gaza, between a rich and powerful state a disaster area without any real political sovereignty. Wall shows the willingness to shut out unwanted control (RITAINE, 2009, P19). The Wall is born of a unilateral decision. It denies any possibility of negotiating with an equivalent part. It emanates from the strong player. A wall is the sign of a sign arbitrary and brand imbalance of political and social exchange. (RITAINE, 2009, P21). They work on the twin principles of deterrence and control of the obstacle and sorting. (RITAINE, 2009, P23). They represent a privileged guard against views people as "dangerous masses" (ROSIERE and JONES, 2011)

### **9. Walls as a Response to the Feeling of Loss of Sovereignty**

The increased transnational flow of people, goods, information and capital across borders is often perceived as a risk to the citizens of the most favored countries. Borders seem to escape the state. The feeling of loss of sovereignty is accentuated by the growing role of transnational organizations and political, the supra national economic and legal institutions in national political affairs. (BROWN,

2010). If the border is the result of a bilateral treaty, governed by conventions established by the border states, the walled border is the result of a unilateral and exclusive policy. In Europe, after opening to each other to create the Schengen area having, states see the wall as a means to reassert its sovereignty and face, alone, illegal migration and refugee's crisis. A border marks a bilateral route, governed by convention, prepared by the border states. In other hand, the wall is unilateral and exclusive. (RGUIG, 2016). The wall became a staging of the authority and power of a state. It thus intends to prove to its citizens that it is capable of meeting its requirements. (RGUIG, 2016). A wall is an answer to counter the growing sense of state's sovereignty loss that develops in the public opinion in these countries. (BROWN, 2010). The wall is also seen as an identity reflex, reactivating the national sentiment. For the states, building a wall gives a sense of control. The factors that contributes to this concern varies depending on the context; however, they are closely related to the processes that accompanied the globalization (VALLET, 2014).

The wall also represents a psychological barrier. Physical walls may fall but remain in the heads. Even today, the Germans say it is easy to recognize someone from the former east Germany. A study from the University of Beijing in 2003 shows that wildlife has evolved in different ways on both sides of the Great Wall. Maybe the same happens to humans. The study of the development of different ecosystems on either side of a walled border to measure its impact on the surrounding landscape is illustrating a rising interest in border ecologies and the long term effect of building barriers. (VALLET, 2011).

The new walls became a way to control flows and most precisely migration flows. It is a means to manage flows in a world overwhelmed by the flow. (GAGNÉ, 2014). They are also a way to assure to the state its sovereignty in a world where globalization is trying to minimize the national policies in favor of large international institutions. The walled border, associated with the means of controls offers the states a means of pressure on its neighbors, and even in the international stage. See how the French president, François Hollande was putting pressure on the British government about the Brexit. He insists that Britain will face Brexit consequences letting migrants trapped in Calais go. (SCULTHORPE and GROVES, 2016).

The new walls work theatrically by projecting power and efficiency they do not really exercise (BROWN, 2008). The wall increases the human drama. The number of deaths in Europe borders amounted to a few dozens in the early 1990s now reached several thousand a year in the late 2000s (MIGREUROP, 2012).

Finally, at a time when everyone is closing itself, it would be good to repeat the Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 man: "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State Everyone has the right to. leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. "

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