

Jacqueline Andres

EU Border Regime

Profiteering from Dehumanisation and
Mythologised Technologies



GUE/NGL

THE LEFT

IN THE
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Note:

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Table of contents

1. The EU border regime	4
Delocalised Borderisation	4
Border imperialism.....	6
Politics of fear, dehumanisation and biometrisation	7
2. Security industry creates borders	10
Creation of the EUropean "Security Industry"	10
The EU Single Market	11
Revolving door and further communication strategies of the security industry	13
Security and defence industry in transition	13
"When peace is no longer profitable"	14
Lobby groups	15
Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD)	15
European Organisation for Security (EOS)	16
European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO).....	17
European Association for Biometrics (EAB).....	17
3. Financing the EU border regime	18
4. Technologies and their promises	21
Presence detectors.....	21
Biometrics.....	22
Satellites.....	23
Drones.....	24
Turbulence of data mobilities	24
5. The Profiteers	26
Major defence companies.....	26
Capital and consulting companies	27
IT Companies	28
Sensors	29
Analytics.....	30
Platforms and autonomous systems	30
Box: The profiteers in your own city	31
6. Protests and resistance	32
„Science for the people“	32
War and border start here – let’s stop them here!.....	34
No cheers for the security industry.....	34
Social movements and trade unions moving closer together.....	35
Security industry creates borders, climate change, environmental degradation, colonial structures, complicity and war	36

1. The EU border regime

أن تموت في عرض البحر
حيث الموج يصطفق بصخب في رأسك
والماء يأرجح جسدك
كقارب مثقوب.

“You’ll die at sea.

Your head rocked by the roaring waves,
your body swaying in the water,
like a perforated boat.”

Abdel Wahab Yousif aka Latinos

On 15 August 2020, Abdel Wahab Yousif, a Sudanese poet, set off from the Libyan coast in a white rubber boat hoping to reach Europe. A few kilometres off the coast, the boat got into trouble and the people on board called the “Alarmphone”. Although the alarmphone informed the Italian, Maltese, Libyan and Tunisian coastguards of the situation, no one came to the rescue. Instead, five armed men approached the boat, fired shots at the engine and set the boat on fire. Forty-five people, five of them minors, lost their lives. Abdel Wahab Yousif was one of them. Thirty-seven people managed to reach the Libyan coast with the help of fishermen. Many of them were then sent to a camp in Libya.¹

Delocalised Borderisation

Within the first six months of 2021, at least 1,146 people died attempting to reach Europe by sea, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).² According to the UNITED network, which fights against the deadly consequences of the building of Fortress Europe, over 44,764 people lost their lives in the period from 1993 to June 2021 due to the EU border regime, that is to say “border militarisation, asylum laws, detention policies and deportations”.³ The 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, “when global digital communication was emerging, were characterized by no-

tions of a ‘borderless world’ where ‘fixed territorial borders [would be] a remnant of the past’.⁴ With the establishment of the Schengen area, border posts within the EU disappeared for the time being, but were instead consolidated at the external borders in an attempt “to stem African immigration to Europe”⁵. Today there are more fortified walls than ever – not only within and along the EU, but worldwide. The past 51 years have seen a proliferation of border barriers across the whole world, 63 in total. According to the report “A Walled World, towards a Global Apartheid”, published jointly by the Centre Delàs d’Estudis per la Pau, Transnational Institute, Stop Wapenhandel and the Palestinian Stop the Wall Campaign, 6 out of 10 people live in a country with border barriers.⁶ At the time of writing, Lithuania is starting to build a border fence with Belarus.⁷ It doesn’t stop at fences and walls, however: “At the same time, modern technological border control has become thoroughly biometricized. With its broad spatial and temporal control, which transcends both sides of the narrow line of the border, present-day border practices are quite different from those of the past.”⁸ While the boundaries between people continue to grow, those between people and technologies are fading.⁹

The EU border regime is also directed at countries of origin and so-called “transit states”, as Christian Jakob and Simone Schlindwein point out: “Following the collective failure to regulate immigration from outside



Source: Jacqueline Andres

Demonstration against the closure of the border between Italy and France in Menton.

among its members, the EU switched to trying to cut off migration streams outside its territory, especially in Africa. First the transit states, then the countries of origin were supposed to stop as many people as possible from entering the Schengen Area – a plan full of hubris.”¹⁰ While colonial in nature, this intention to influence migration policy in states along the EU’s externalized border is not without limitations. Paolo Cuttitta reminds us that it is inherently eurocentric and state-centric to think that the EU, simply by virtue of some existing dependencies, can easily impose its migration policy on other governments. Political developments within those various states always result from a confrontation between different state and non-state actors.¹¹ Furthermore, the underlying interests also reflect a constant dynamic when Morocco reduced its border control activities near the Spanish enclaves in May 2021, around 6,000 people made it to Ceuta in one day. This move can be understood as a reaction to the medical treatment of the secretary general of the Sahrawi independence movement Frente Polisario, Brahim Ghali.¹² In Belarus, President Lukashenko uses migrants as political pawns for unrelated political interests.¹³ Paolo Cuttitta points out that “[t]he externalisation of border controls and borders has become a central theme of relations between the EU and its enlarged neighbourhood, but also reminds us that externalisation is not a simple and linear process”.¹⁴

Cuttitta also suggests that the notion of delocalisation of boundaries might be more appropriate “to emphasise the directional neutrality of the relationship between interior and exterior”.¹⁵ This is not to deny that a displacement or delocalisation is under way, but as dynamically and quickly as it could arise, it can also be reversed. Gerko Egert also shows to what extent border surveillance has become delocalised. He describes how the EU is seeking to use Eurosur to become a ‘choreo power’, not so much wanting to stop migratory move-

Over 44,764 people lost their lives in the period from 1993 to June 2021 due to the EU border regime.

ments, but much rather wanting to be able to steer them, and thus monitor much more than just the direct course of the border: “With Eurosur, the ‘management of migration’ used by the EU is no longer limited to border controls, but aims at the circulatory movements of migration itself. A widely ramified network of surveillance technologies creates a permanently updated ‘situation awareness’ of existing and possible migratory movements, whose multidimensional data and move-

ment analyses replace the purely territorially and geopolitically organised border security techniques. Eurosur processes and distributes surveillance data to the numerous actors of migration management, prompting measures such as police operations that can take place in countries as diverse as Tunisia, Libya, Senegal, Mali, Italy or Germany. To this end, the migration control regime cooperates with numerous partner states within and outside the Schengen area. Migratory movements are monitored, regulated, registered and (re)directed¹⁶ or choreographed along their complex routes.

Border imperialism

The choreography of migration is by no means an attempt to hermetically seal off the EU, which would not be feasible anyway. It is as much about managing migration as it is about creating a disenfranchised category of workers. Ida Danewid puts this in a historical continuity: “European capitalist modernity was since its inception linked to the creation of highly expendable, super-exploitable, and moveable labouring subjects, including African captives, sharecroppers, peons, and indentured servitude labourers, among others. In the aftermath of decolonisation and the “racial break”, these older forms of direct, colonial control over the global labour supply have gradually been replaced by a system of resource extraction and continued “sweated” labour in the global South, and the creation of “immigrant labour” in the North – a bifurcated system kept in place by the racialised global border regime.”¹⁷ Danewid refers to the analysis of Harsha Walia, who explains that “capitalism requires precarious and exploitable workers to facilitate capital accumulation, and creates those precarious lives through hierarchies of systemic oppression along with its extractions of labour and land.”¹⁸ According to Danewid, borders play a central role in this: “[B]y creating differential zones of labour, they naturalise a system built on the hyperextraction of surplus value from racialised bodies. It is ultimately within this context that contemporary calls for closed borders and nativist social democracy must be examined and understood: not as exceptions from an otherwise peaceful European normality, but as part of the long history of racial capitalism which has always sought to control the movement of the poor by “cut[ting] the social fabric at its weakest, i.e. through the bodies of those racialized, gendered and nationalized as undeserving.”¹⁹

On 24 June 2021, Camara Fantamadi, a 27-year-old agricultural worker from Mali, died near Brindisi. For 6 euros an hour, he worked together with thousands of other seasonal workers from Africa and Eastern Europe in the fields of southern Italy in the midday heat at 40 degrees Celsius. On his way home he collapsed and died – “Camara died of exploitation”.²⁰ The list of people who died of exploitation in the EU is long. Aimé Césaire’s words from 1950 remain relevant today: “The fact is that the so-called European civilization – “Western” civilization – as it has been shaped by two centuries of bourgeois rule, is incapable of solving the two major problems to which its existence has given rise: the problem of the proletariat and the colonial problem; that Europe is unable to justify itself either before the bar of “reason” or before the bar of “conscience”; and that, increasingly, it takes refuge in a hypocrisy which is all the more odious because it is less and less likely to deceive.”²¹ The ongoing militarisation and technologisation of border surveillance is pushing people on the move to choose ever more dangerous routes to make it to Europe while avoiding detection – Europe is revealing its ugly face.

Harsha Walia summarises the connection between borders and exploitation in a nutshell: border imperialism. In her view, border imperialism is made up of four components: “within the matrix of racialized empire and neoliberal capitalism, border imperialism is

“European capitalist modernity was since its inception linked to the creation of highly expendable, super-exploitable, and moveable labouring subjects [...].”

underwritten by, first, the free flow of capitalism and dictates of Western imperialism that create displacements, while simultaneously securing Western borders against the very people who capitalism and empire have displaced; second, the process of criminalizing migrants through their construction as deviants and illegals, which also ensures profits for companies that receive



As Far as my Fingertips Take Me
 Quelle: Tania el Khoury

contracts for border militarization and migrant detention; third, the entrenchment of a racialized national and imperial identity with its gendered contours that has specific embodied and material impacts locally as well as globally; and fourth, the legal denial of permanent residency to a growing number of migrants to ensure an exploitable, marginalized, and expendable pool of labor.”²² Walia sees an interplay between militarised, securitised states and capitalism: “[S]tate criminalization of migrants directly feeds capitalist profits in ever-expanding security markets.”²³

Politics of fear, dehumanisation and biometrisation

The development of these expanding security markets and migration policies is inextricably linked to the role of fear in society. Thus, according to Sara Ahmed, “it is through announcing a crisis in security that new forms of security, border policing and surveillance become justified.”²⁴

Sara Ahmed recognises a connection between the representation of migrants and terrorists: “This violent slide between the figure of the asylum seeker and the international terrorist works to construct those who are ‘without home’ as sources of ‘our fear’ and as reasons for new forms of border policing, whereby the future is always a threat posed by others who may pass by and pass their way into our communities. The containment of the bodies of others affected by this economy of fear is most violently revealed in the literal deaths of those seeking asylum in containers, deaths that remain unmourned by the very nations who embody the promise of a future for those seeking asylum. This is a chilling reminder of what is at stake in the global economies of fear.”²⁵

According to Naomi Klein, the security industry, which sells biometric technology among other things, profits from these economies of fear: “The more panicked our societies become, convinced that there are terrorists lurking in every mosque, the higher the news ratings soar, the more biometric IDs and liquid-explosive-detection devices the complex sells, and the more high-tech fences it builds. If the dream of the open, borderless „small planet“ was the ticket to profits in the nineties, the nightmare of the menacing, fortified Western continents, under siege from jihadists and illegal immigrants, plays the same role in the new millennium.”²⁶

The impression of a Europe “under siege” is the one that is conveyed by most of the major newspapers in

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Source: Ian Soete, flickr (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

A person in Calais holds up a sign in 2016 that reads, "We are not a danger, we are in danger."

the EU, which print migratory routes that omit the personal destinies and violence experienced by people on the move as well as the existence of migratory movements out of Europe. As Cinzia Atzeni points out: “The vision of the traditional map is often that of a linear migration phenomenon, from one point to another converging around a single space, omitting its plurality and social complexity through a dehumanisation that characterises its construction itself. The one-sidedness of the arrows conveys an impression encirclement, but no hint of the dangers, risks and sufferings of this journey.”²⁷ Maps are created on which numerous arrows move towards nation states – both colour and size ratio of the arrows, as well as the chosen labels, create the impression that an external threat is creeping towards the EUropean nation states.

Biometric applications also play a part in breaking down complexities and pluralities at the expense of human individuality. This becomes particularly clear when considering the historical emergence of biometrics at the end of the 19th century, around the time of the industrial revolution.²⁸ According to Ariana Dongus, one of the crucial figures in the early history of biometrics is Francis Galton – Charles Darwin’s second cousin. By using people in the then British colony of India as “material capital”, he “intended to find evidence that race existed as a hidden order”.²⁹ After testing and developing biometric techniques in the colonies, they were later applied to marginalised, impoverished people in Britain. As a result, according to Dongus, they experienced a dehumanisation similar to that of people under colonial rule in India, in that they too became “a mass of strangers, alien, dangerously mobile, and predisposed by heredity to crime”.³⁰ Their bodies, their classified fingerprints, facial features and irises were used to re-determine, to recode their identity.³¹ According to Dongus, classifying certain people as dangerous and threatening serves a particular purpose: “This maintains the hierarchical divisions of class within the social order”.³² In the further development of biometrics, such technologies were frequently tried and tested in places with “little to no privacy regulations”³³, notably in war zones or refugee camps. Dongus sees the classification inherent in biometric applications as “a practice of building borders within the social order”.³⁴ And not only does it lead to a dehumanising identity formation that reduces people and their stories, emotions and thoughts to their bodies, but it also results in “the

production of types of people, movements, and behaviours enables the extraction of data from a surplus population”.³⁵

In today’s “economy of fear”, the security industry often sells its products for a variety of operational areas that range from migration control to counter-terrorism and crime prevention. Likewise, current EU missions and measures also frequently combine migration control, counter-terrorism and counter-crime. Thus, Frontex’s joint operation Themis has been expanded to include counter-terrorism, while NATO’s counter-terrorism operation Active Endeavour has been renamed Sea Guardian and expanded to include migration control. In a similar vein, databases such as Eurodac are undergoing a development best described as “purpose creep”: Established in 2000, Eurodac was initially used to compare fingerprints in order to determine in which EU member state a given person had applied for asylum. As of 2013, the EU Commission allowed law enforcement authorities, police and intelligence agencies of the member states to access the collected data in order to fight terrorism and serious crime.³⁶

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2. Security industry creates borders

“Everyone has a white paper”

Participant at a large trade fair for border security technology³⁷

Security industry influences politics – but how this occurs and how the “security industry” is constituted has changed or only just taken shape in recent decades. The early 2000s saw a flurry of developments: After the end of the Cold War, there was a global contraction of the arms market and, at the same time, new social and environmental issues were increasingly presented as threats calling for a “security policy” response. The emergence of new technologies at that time shaped a new idea of security – security as defined and provided by corporate technological development.

This process, which unfolded against the background of the Bush administration’s post-9/11 “War on Terror”, is detailed by Naomi Klein in her 2007 book “The Shock Doctrine”: “As high-tech firms have jumped from one bubble to another, the result has been a bizarre merger of security and shopping cultures. Many technologies in use today as part of the War on Terror – biometric identification, video surveillance, Web tracking, data mining, sold by companies like Verint Systems and Seisint, Accenture and ChoicePoint – had been developed by the private sector before September 11 as a way to build detailed customer profiles, opening up new vistas for micromarketing. They also promised to reduce the number of retail workers at supermarkets

and shopping malls, because biometric IDs, combined with cash cards, would eliminate the need for tellers. When widespread discomfort about big-brother technologies stalled many of these initiatives, it caused dismay to both marketers and retailers. September 11 loosened this logjam in the market: suddenly the fear of terror was greater than the fear of living in a surveillance society.”³⁸ Many of the products of the European security industry have potential applications for “digital” border management, the military and police authorities as well as for civilian or private-sector purposes, such as autonomous systems, electro-optical sensors, cloud services or even algorithms for data analysis.

Creation of the European “Security Industry”

During the global security boom of the 2000s, the now so called security industry was also becoming entrenched in the EU. According to Theodore Baird, in order to be counted as legitimate partners in the development of a securitised migration policy for the EU, the “security industry” first had to configure itself as such. Baird explains the concept of “security industry” in Europe “through the concerted action of a network of firms producing security technologies, primarily large aerospace and defence firms”³⁹ Only then were these bestowed with “the label of ‘industry’”⁴⁰. This industry comprises various players, “security and defence

corporations (from large systems integrators to small and medium enterprises), applied and academic research organisations (such as universities), consultancies, government ministries (as end-users), and EU institutions (such as the Joint Research Centre of the Commission), among others”.⁴¹ According to Baird, this constructed “industrial” identity serves to be perceived as an appropriate contact.⁴² As now recognised interlocutors, security industry actors influence EU policy in three steps, according to Theodore Baird: First, by “framing the context of border crossings as an urgent and emergent security problem, necessitating interventions of corporate actors which sell technological solutions [...]; second by articulating visions of the future which elicit unease in order to sell technologies, and third by situating the market for security technologies within the Single Market programme.”⁴³

It should also be mentioned at this point that in the 2000s, not only migration but also climate change and terrorism were securitised. With advice (in the form of a white paper) always at the ready, the security industry positions itself as a solution provider for numerous social and political developments that are declared as security problems and expands the market from defence products to security products that are interesting for both the private and military sectors. In 2007, the European Organisation for Security was formed as a spin-off of the defence lobby group Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) “to better lobby defence companies in the emerging ‘homeland security’ market”.⁴⁴ Baird notes that European Union defence spending fell in 2008,⁴⁵ increasing the importance of dual-use products that can be used for both civilian and military purposes.⁴⁶ By blurring the line between the civilian and military sectors, the arms industry was able to “get rid of their image as merchants of war” at the same time.⁴⁷

“These framings have”, according to Baird, “led to increased research funding and collaboration between EU institutions and key industrial actors and movements towards the creation of an ‘EU Security Single Market’ and a single Internal Security Strategy”.⁴⁸

The still young security industry experienced strong support from the EU Commission early on, for example via the latter’s industrial policy for the security industry created in 2012. In the communication on this industrial policy, which includes a “Security Industrial Policy Action Plan for an innovative and competitive Security

Industry”, the EU Commission states: “The security industry represents a sector with a significant potential for growth and employment. Over the last ten years the global security market has grown nearly tenfold from ~€10 billion to a market size of ~€100 billion in 2011. Numerous studies show that the EU’s as well as the worldwide security market will continue to have a growth rate which is beyond the average GDP growth. In response to this significant potential for market growth, the Commission made the security industry

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one of the essential parts of the EU 2020 flagship initiative ‘An Integrated Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era Putting Competitiveness and Sustainability at Centre Stage.’”⁴⁹ The EU Commission summarises the following areas under security industry: “aviation security; maritime security; border security; critical infrastructure protection; counter-terror intelligence (including cyber security and communication); crisis management/civil protection; physical security protection; and protective clothing.”⁵⁰

In short, the EU Commission, recognising economic benefits in the industry, decided to unify, standardise and thus “enhance growth and increase employment in the EU’s security industry”.⁵¹

The EU Single Market

According to Theodore Baird, the security industry is striving to become part of the EU’s single market: “the security industry frames social contexts as urgent problems that are solved with technological solutions, pressing for a Single Market in security technologies that profits from future visions of insecurity.”⁵² The security industry calls for and promotes a common market of the “economy of fear” – “in order to overcome projected



Source: Collettivo FX.

Murales in Iglesias in Sardinia not far from the bomb factory of Rheinmetall weapon ammunition.

declines in the European market share for security technologies”⁵³

The EU attaches great importance to the internal market: “Over the past 25 years, the integration of our economies throughout the Single Market has generated millions of jobs, and made the EU the world’s largest economy. The Single Market is the jewel in the crown of our integration and this domestic market of 500 million people is the foundation for Europe’s strength, at home and abroad.”⁵⁴ According to its own declarations, the lobby organisation EOS has been committed to the development of a harmonised European security market for more than a decade.⁵⁵ The European Economic and Social Committee’s July 2021 call for an Observatory for Critical Technologies to develop a “common technology taxonomy applicable to all sectors” so as to “foster cross-fertilisation between civil, defence, security and space” should come as good news for EOS and other security industry players.⁵⁶ After all, this should make the security industry’s place in the EU’s single market more legitimate and more profitable.

Revolving door and further communication strategies of the security industry

Naomi Klein describes how the defence companies after 9/11 and the IT industry after the dotcom crash rushed into new markets: the “homeland security sector”. Klein quotes Peter Swire, former Chief Counselor for Privacy under the Clinton administration: “You have government on a holy mission to ramp up information gathering and you have an information technology industry desperate for new markets.”⁵⁷ In the process, as Klein explains, the so-called “revolving door” turned into an open gate, and this gave rise to a form of corporatism: “[B]ig business and big government combining their formidable powers to regulate and control the citizenry.”⁵⁸

The EU has seen a similar development and there is an ever growing number of examples of the use of the revolving door effect and the influence of the security industry on EU legislation. Theodore Baird interprets this as a successful legitimisation of the security industry – “providing employment to individuals formerly working for EU institutions and vice versa maintains discursive frames and upholds a reigning doxa of security”⁵⁹

A prime example is Thierry Breton, who as the current Commissioner for Internal Market or Commissioner for Defence Industry and Space managed to get to the crucial junction between the (defence) industry

and the “crown jewel of EU integration”. Previously, he headed the company Atos, and before that, he transformed the company Thomson into Thales, one of the world’s largest defence companies.⁶⁰ Having a representative of the arms and “security industry” in this position might have been the dream of the arms industry, which tried to position itself favourably again by establishing the security industry and to influence the development of EU industrial policy. Another very recent example might be Jorge Domecq. As the then head of the European Defence Agency, he became a strategic advisor to the defence contractor Airbus Defence and Space.⁶¹

Other than using the revolving door effect, actors in the security industry resort to different communication strategies to successfully pitch their agenda to the EU institutions. Theodore Baird identifies nine categories of strategic communication methods: 1) Direct communication, 2) Indirect communication (e.g. through third-party consultants or lawfirms), 3) Conferences, 4) Publications, 5) Media advocacy, 6) Research and Development Projects and Public–Private Partnership, 7) Expert groups, 8) Comitology (expert committees among others) and 9) Public consultations.⁶²

An example of strategic communication that has been successful for the security industry is the so-called Hotspots. The information technology company Unisys created the term and concept of hotspots in 2014. A year later, the first hotspots emerged in Italy and Greece as part of the reformed Common European Asylum System.⁶³

Security and defence industry in transition

The defence industry is currently evolving. We witness a steady buy-out of tech companies by large companies that are also in the defence sector. If we look at the development of Eurodac, we’ll find companies such as Cogent Systems and Bull among the early contractors. Today, Cogent Systems belongs to Thales and Bull to Atos. As noted by the European Economic and Social Committee, civilian product developments are no longer drawing on military innovations as they used to, but it is the other way round: “Today, emerging technologies are driven by huge investment from commercial sectors, and technological dissemination increasingly flows in the opposite direction, from civil to defence. In this context, digitalisation is of particular importance.”⁶⁴

With the increasing importance of digitalisation

and big data and analysis programmes, more and more small start-ups, which often sell the knowledge acquired at public universities, are being bought up. It is becoming increasingly difficult to draw a line between the civilian, security and defence industries. Especially with regard to algorithms, as Kate Crawford already warned with reference to Silicon Valley, control over the results of research is mostly lacking. Even if originally written for something innocuous, they frequently take on a life of their own. The lack of control over the whereabouts of research results that prevails in start-up culture feeds a new economic dynamic in neoliberalism that dissolves the dividing line between military and civilian. The EU Commission is in fact striving for a convergence of the different industries – in order to make better use of the “synergy effects”. In its action plan for synergies between the civilian, defence and space industries, the Commission presented a three-stage action plan on 22 February 2021, which, among other things, intends to “[promote] that EU funding for research and development, including on defence and space, has economic and technological dividends for EU citizens (the ‘spin-offs’), [facilitate] the use of civil industry research achievements and civil-driven innovation in European defence cooperation projects (the ‘spin-ins’).”⁶⁵ To better engage in “the defence market”, the EU Commission advises small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups that they “need to adapt their products/business models to the specificities of these [security and defence] markets”.⁶⁶ On the very day the action plan was published, the lobby organisation Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) welcomed it in a press release and offered itself as a “competent and reliable partner” to support its implementation: “As ASD’s members are active in all three sectors covered by the Action Plan, we invite the Commission to draw on the technical and practical expertise of our members for its implementation.”⁶⁷

“When peace is no longer profitable”

In her book “The Shock Doctrine”, Naomi Klein also looks at the security industry in Israel and sees the development of this industry as a warning that peace may no longer be profitable: “The fact that Israel continues to enjoy booming prosperity, even as it wages war against its neighbors and escalates the brutality in the

occupied territories, demonstrates just how perilous it is to build an economy based on the premise of continual war and deepening disasters.”⁶⁸ According to Naomi Klein, the economy has changed in that rising prosperity under neoliberalism is no longer tied to stability conditioned on “peace”; instead, the motto has become: “[I]nstability is the new stability.”⁶⁹ After the Israeli economy had the highest high-tech dependency in the 1990s, causing it to be particularly impacted by the bursting of the dotcom bubble, the government re-focused the economy: “[T]he growth provided by the dot-com bubble would be replaced with a homeland security boom. It was the perfect marriage [...]”⁷⁰ Consequently, in a very short time Israel became a kind of “the go-to country for antiterrorism technologies”.⁷¹ Naomi Klein thus notes that “more and more countries [are] turning themselves into fortresses (walls and high-tech fences are going up on the border between India and Kashmir, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan)”⁷² and that it could therefore be that “‘security barriers’ may prove to be the biggest disaster market of all”.⁷³

The development of the markets for biometrics, drones and other surveillance tools seem to prove her right. In July 2020, the EU Commission presented its

It is becoming increasingly difficult to draw a line between the civilian, security and defence industries.

EU Strategy for a Security Union, and the Commission also presents not peace but threats or instability as the driving force of the economy and society: “The new Security Union strategy lays the foundations for a security ecosystem that spans the entire breadth of European society. It is grounded in the knowledge that security is a shared responsibility. Security is an issue that affects everyone. All government bodies, businesses, social organisations, institutions and citizens must fulfil their own responsibilities in order to make our societies more secure.”⁷⁴ More people in the EU should work in the security industry to address the security industry’s labour shortage: “the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics needed in cutting-edge areas such as cybersecurity.”⁷⁵ shall increase. The “European Research Area” and the “Euro-

pean Education Area” submit to the security narrative and threaten to develop dependencies on the security industry and thus on supposed “threat situations” and on what Sara Ahmed calls an economy of fear.

While the Israeli security industry benefits from the demographic that has been declared a threat to “test” its products, it appears that in the EU the disenfranchisement of migrants has become a convenient way to test and, above all, to collect data. Ewa Lewis describes the process of disenfranchisement in reference to border surveillance between the US state of Arizona and Mexico as follows: “It’s about dehumanizing an entire category of people and creating a world in which those people are criminalized and their deaths are normalized.”⁷⁶

Lobby groups

The lobby groups of the EU security industry keep adapting to the current trends of technology development and security discourse and – through numerous offshoots – churn out “competent and reliable partners” for the EU institutions. The ASD, for example, became the EOS and the EOS in turn became the European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO). Again and again, the same handful of individuals can be found in different positions across the lobby organisations – for example, Giorgio Mosca from the Italian arms company Leonardo is chairman of the EOS and vice-chairman of the Security and Business Unit of the ASD. In essence, their demands are always similar: critical technologies of the future create security. These technologies or “sol-

In July 2020, the EU Commission presented its EU Strategy for a Security Union, and the Commission also presents not peace but threats or instability as the driving force of the economy and society.

utions” are provided by the members of the lobby groups – but their research (innovation) and development require substantial government spending.

Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD)

The ASD was founded in 2004 and sees itself as “the voice of European Aeronautics, Space, Defence and Security Industries, representing over 3,000 companies”⁷⁷.

With regard to the security industry, “ASD aims to provide a clear and coherent narrative about the benefits, constraints and aspirations of the sector. It does so mainly through its Security Business Unit (SBU) which



European Border Control Center.

Source: Euroscur.



Source: Ittmust, flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

"The ships sailed" - migrants on their way to the USA at the beginning of the 20th century with life jackets of today's refugees.

brings together senior representatives from European companies and associations. [...] It strives for the development of a genuine security industrial strategy, contributes to the preparation and implementation of the EU security research programme and works towards the creation of an internal market for security. The SBU is currently chaired by Mr David Luengo from Indra and vice-chaired by Mr Giorgio Mosca from Leonardo.”⁷⁸

In order to benefit from the booming border security market, the ASD aimed, among other things, in 2017 to “further develop its relationship with Frontex”⁷⁹ and also to “support investments in R&I and border management infrastructures”.⁸⁰ For the new Horizon Europe research programme, ASD recommends to “continue to support successful security priorities of Horizon 2020, namely urban-, cyber- and border security”⁸¹, but also not to lose sight of new technologies: “[N]ew technologies that are particularly relevant for security, such as Artificial Intelligence or Data Science should be prioritised. [...] Don’t neglect other technology trends with (apparently) more narrow security dimension, such as Quantum Computing.”⁸²

European Organisation for Security (EOS)

The EOS sees itself as “the voice of the security industry and research community in Europe”.⁸³ EOS was founded

in 2007 out of the defence lobby group Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe “[i]n an attempt to better lobby for the arms companies in the emerging “homeland security” market”.⁸⁴ In the same year, the EU tendered €2 billion for security research through its Research Framework Programme – and in creating the EOS, defence companies, including other economic actors and research institutions, successfully positioned themselves to secure the contracts.⁸⁵ Out of the 15 major security contracts, 11 went to members of the EOS.⁸⁶

The members of the EOS come from different “security domains”: “border, cyber, transport and crisis management”.⁸⁷ Already in its founding phase, the EOS presented solutions regarding border management to the then EU Commissioner Frattini – this exchange was part of the basis for the creation of Eurosur. In the EOS, working groups dealt with specific topics. One of them is the “Integrated Border Security Working Group”. The group “facilitates the development and uptake of better technology solutions for border security both at border checkpoints, and along maritime and land borders.”⁸⁸ and is thus in exchange with the EU Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, Frontex and eu-LISA, the European Agency for Large-scale IT Systems. The working group is chaired by Isto Mattila (Laurea University of Applied Sciences) and vice-chaired by Sandrine Trochu (Idemia) and Nicolas Barioz (Airbus).

The current chair of the ESO is Giorgio Mosca (Leonardo). Vice-chairs are David Luengo (Indra), who also chairs the SBU of ASD, Mark Miller (Conceptivity) and Gerd Müller (secunet).

European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO)

ECSO was founded in 2016 by EOS – which outsourced one of its previous core competencies, cybersecurity, to ECSO. In the same year, ECSO entered into a public-private partnership with the EU Commission to jointly promote the EU cybersecurity industry.⁸⁹ To this day, cybersecurity is at the core of its lobbying work: “The main goal of ECSO is to coordinate the development of the European Cybersecurity Ecosystem support the protection of European Digital Single Market, ultimately to contribute to the advancement of European digital sovereignty and strategic autonomy.” While this main objective does not explicitly include the expansion of the EU’s “digital borders”, the growing digitalisation of border management is part of the “European digital single market” that ECSO aims to protect. The companies represented partly overlap with the members of the ESO.

The chairman of ECSO is Philippe Vannier (Atos) and the vice-chairman is shared by Guillaume Poupard (Agence Nationale de la Sécurité des Systèmes d’Information), Charlotte Graire (Airbus CyberSecurity), Giorgio Cusma Lorenzo (Intesa San Paolo), Fabio Martinelli (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche). Gerd Müller and Mark Miller are both vice-chairmen in the EOS as well as in ECSO, but Müller represents eurobits e.V. in ECSO and not the IT security technology company secunet.

European Association for Biometrics (EAB)

The EAB describes itself as “the leading voice for digital ID & biometrics in Europe”⁹⁰ It emerged in 2011 from the “BEST Network” project funded by the EU Commission, which established a network to provide “a European forum for representatives from business, politics and research on biometrics”.⁹¹ The EAB, founded in the premises of the Fraunhofer Institute for Computer Graphics Research (IGD) “in the heart of the digital and science city” Darmstadt, was meant to build a Europe-wide network while waiting for the biometrics boom to kick in, which would “promote the use of technologies that recognise people”⁹² or “advance research and development in biometrics” in discussions with politics

and business.⁹³ Members include government agencies, businesses, research institutions (including public universities), individuals and students.⁹⁴ Today, Alexander Nouak (Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft IGD) is Chairman of the Board and Farzin Deravi (University of Kent) is Deputy Chairman. Board members are Els Kindt (KU Leuven), Christoph Busch (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) and Ralph Lessmann (HID Global).⁹⁵ The board composition in the founding year includes a rather unexpected member: Michiel Kraak (UNHCR). In July 2021, the EAB invited its members to a workshop in preparation for the biometrics-relevant calls of the current EU research and development funding programme, Horizon Europe.⁹⁶ An overview of the Commission’s objectives regarding “Border Management and Fighting Crime and Terrorism” was followed

The European Organisation for Security (EOS) was founded in 2007 out of the defence lobby group Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe “[i]n an attempt to better lobby for the arms companies in the emerging “homeland security” market”.

by a presentation of calls for proposals on combating identity and travel document fraud. At the World Border Security Congress, which will take place from 5 to 7 October 2021 at the Divani Caravel Hotel in Athens, Christoph Busch from the EAB will give a presentation on the Horizon 2020-funded iMARS project for the detection of manipulated images. The event is sponsored by Hensoldt, the shuttle bus service provided by Idemia and the water bottles are by courtesy of Smiths Detection.⁹⁷

3. Financing the EU border regime

Funding for migration control measures is growing steadily. The main funding instruments include the Integrated Border Management Fund, the European Defence Fund, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI/Europe

in the World), the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and research funding under the EU’s seven-year research and development programmes (currently Horizon Europe) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

Funding tool	Founding year	Total budget for a given period	Examples of financing activities
Research Framework Programme of the EU (currently Horizon Europe)	1984	1984-1987: € 3.3 billion 2002-2007: € 17.5 billion 2014-2020: around € 80 billion 2021-2027: € 95.5 billion	Numerous research projects on the technologisation of the EU border regime were funded by the previous Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020. ⁹⁸ Horizon Europe also provides research and innovation funding for "border management (including customs security and maritime security)" as part of "Cluster 3: Civil security for society". ⁹⁹
Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)	2007	2007-2019: € 216.1 million to support Western Balkan partners in the area of migration financed by IPA ¹⁰⁰	According to Mark Akkerman, the IPA II funded "Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey. [...] This seeks to strengthen the capacity for identification and registration of forcibly displaced persons and increase cooperation on deportations" ¹⁰¹ IPA III, together with the NDICI, is expected to play a role in the implementation of the "EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration" adopted in April 2021, including the so-called "voluntary return and reintegration" ¹⁰²

Funding tool	Founding year	Total budget for a given period	Examples of financing activities
Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund	2014	2021-2027: € 9,88 billion	The fund is intended to “contribute to the fight against irregular migration [...]. Other objectives include ensuring that those without a right to stay in the EU are returned and readmitted in an effective, safe and dignified way. The fund will also support those people to begin reintegrating in non-EU countries to which they have been returned”. ¹⁰³
Internal Security Fund	2014	2021-2027: € 1,93 billion	“The ISF will contribute in particular to: increasing the exchange of information between EU law enforcement authorities and enhancing cooperation and cross border operations, cross-border cooperation via intensifying cross-border joint operations, fight against crime via strengthening capabilities to combat and prevent crime and reinforcing protection against terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime” ¹⁰⁴
EU Regional Trust Fund for Syria Madad	2014 (Mandate ends prospectively at the end of 2021)	2014-2020 € 2,196 billion	Of the Madad budget, 2.1% went to programmes in Serbia and northern Macedonia to support migration management. De facto, this fund financed the construction and renovation of so called “Reception Centres” in Serbia and Northern Macedonia. ¹⁰⁵
EUTF Africa	2015 (Mandate ends prospectively on 31.12.2021)	2015-2021 (of which € 4.4 billion from the European Development Fund (EDF)) ¹⁰⁶	At least 75 projects in the field of “Improved Migration Management” (IMM) worth more than 1.412 billion euros have been funded by EUTF Africa so far. Out of these, more than 7 million euros went to projects in North Africa alone ¹⁰⁷ . In Libya, the aim is to “strengthen the capacity of relevant Libyan authorities in the areas of border and migration management, including border control and surveillance, addressing smuggling and trafficking of human beings, search and rescue at sea and in the desert”. ¹⁰⁸ The Better Migration Management (BMM) project – with a name no less hypocritical than the IMM – is largely funded by the EUTF. It aims to improve border management in East Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and Ethiopia). ¹⁰⁹

■ **EU BORDER REGIME: PROFITEERING FROM DEHUMANISATION AND MYTHOLOGISED TECHNOLOGIES**

Funding tool	Founding year	Total budget for a given period	Examples of financing activities
Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRT)	2016	2016-2017: € 3 billion 2018-2019 € 3 billion planned: 2021-2023 € 3 billion ¹¹⁰	The "EU-Turkey deal" is an anti-human rights agreement to require Turkey to control and manage migration to EUropa. In addition to programmes for the medical care of refugees in Turkey, FRT also finances the "[s]trengthening [of] the Operational Capacities of the Turkish Coast Guard in Managing Migration Flows in the Mediterranean Sea" ¹¹¹ , including by providing technical equipment and migration-related training programmes. ¹¹²
European Defence Fund	2017	2017-2020: € 590 million 2021-2027: € 8 billion	Of the total budget, 2.7 billion euros will be invested "for collaborative defence research to address emerging and future challenges and threats". It is likely that this research will also serve the technologisation of border surveillance, e.g. with regard to autonomous systems or sensor technology. This likelihood is reinforced by the action plan, which aims to strengthen the synergy effects of research of civilian (security) industry as well as those of the defence industry. ¹¹³
Integrated border management funds	2021	2021-2027: € 6,24 billion	"The fund will also support the European Border and Coast Guard, the implementation of the hotspot approach, and the interoperability of various IT systems. These include the Entry-Exit System, the Visa Information System, the European Travel Information and Authorisation System, Eurodac and the Schengen Information System." ¹¹⁴
Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI)	2021	For the period 2021-2027: € 79.46 billion	10% of the NDICI's total budget is to be allocated to "mobility and migration management", i.e. the management and control of migration, and "security and stability". ¹¹⁵

4. Technologies and their promises

The costly technologisation of border and migration surveillance is premised on the belief that sensors, thermal imaging cameras, drones, satellites and biometrics can be used to provide real-time situational awareness at the EU's external borders.

But the promising technologies have vulnerabilities and often fail to deliver on their promises. Moreover, border surveillance technologies are often electronic systems and as such are prone to similar vulnerabilities as our everyday electronic devices: dead batteries, broken connections, errors in screen display or operation, and missing adapters. All electronic devices break down from time to time and need to be repaired or replaced. An unpaid electricity bill, to take a banal example, can lead to the temporary suspension of electronic systems: Which is exactly what happened when the electricity at the Bulgarian-Turkish border was switched off in 2015 “in the middle of the Schengen crisis because the electricity could no longer be paid for”.¹¹⁶ A critical look at the technologies in use reveals a wide gulf between the reality and their marketed image of reliability, efficiency and objectivity. Even if they do not work flawlessly, their combined effect is to dehumanise people on the move and push them to choose ever more dangerous routes in order to progress on their journey. Michela Pugliese, migration and asylum researcher at Euro-Med Monitor, summarised the role of technologies as follows: “High-risk technologies are the new weapons employed by EU governments to pretend that they are resolute, efficient

and strong in their control of borders and management of migration flows, while profiting from yet another violation of migrants' legitimate right to seek asylum, that leads to nothing more than useless pain. [...] EU funds are poured into disturbing experimental technologies that criminalize migrants as thieves and hunt them as animals at the borders, rather than into beneficial realities fostering safe and legal routes, fair asylum processes and integration.”¹¹⁷

Presence detectors

Sensors (from sentire: to feel, perceive, smell, hear) measure changes in their environment and translate a physical or chemical property into an electrical signal – sensors in border surveillance include radars, heart-beat monitors, CO2 detectors, movement meters or cameras. The resulting data volumes often require automatic evaluation in order to be useable. Exceptions to this are the heartbeat monitors and CO2 detectors, which are used to individually examine enclosed spaces such as vehicles or containers for signs of ‘bare life’. Like ‘a gigantic ear’, they are attached to the outside of a truck, for example. If they go off, the border guards enter the enclosed space with dogs, which then track down the people.¹¹⁸ The heartbeat monitor alone is not enough to locate a person, dogs are still the best sniffers – but even they have their disadvantages: “[D]ogs can only be trained to a limited set of applications; [they] get tired

after a relatively short operation time; they are poorly accepted by the public” and last but not least they are not cost-effective – in other words: “[T]hey are expensive.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, it is emphasised that a close proximity to the beating and thus living human heart to a similar or over-sounding background noise could present the scanners with a technical challenge. Each room has to be examined individually, requiring large-scale inspection.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, according to Perle Møhl, presence detection technologies such as heartbeat monitors and CO2 detectors break human life down to what Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life”, and this is how Møhl describes the tracking of people on the move in a truck by the Guardia Civil in Ceuta: “Their hearts and their breathing had betrayed them.”¹²¹ Breathing is detected by CO2 detectors. These can be used to detect changes in the CO2 content of the air – again only in enclosed spaces. The CO2 content can also be influenced by animals or fermentation processes of the loaded goods. Apart from Frontex,¹²² other actors also use these CO2 detectors. Both are not suitable for systematic controls as described in the research call “Innovative, costefficient and reliable technology to detect humans hidden in vehicles/closed compartments” under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development between 2012 and 2013: “fully automated; contactless; reliable, with acceptable error/false positive rates (best minimum in comparison to dogs/manual searches); robust and resistant to different environments and weather conditions; (ideally in a one-for-all gate through which all vehicles/containers are automatically screened).”¹²³ Despite the promising names of research projects that won the EU Commission’s call for proposals, such as DOGGIES, SNIFFER, SNIFFLES and SNOOPY, this wish has not yet come true.

Biometrics

“I turned on the stove and waited until the burners were hot.
Then I placed all 10 fingers on them.
When my hands were burnt I took them off and put oil on them.
Then I put my hands back on the burners and burned them again.”¹²⁴

Hassan

We are living in an age of biometrics – both in the private sphere and in security policy: biometric applications, which include the matching of fingerprints, irises, voices, vein patterns, facial recognition, gait recognition or even writing recognition, are increasingly found in our everyday lives in the use of security systems of electronic devices and in the EU border regime. With the help of biometric applications, people are datafied in order to be able to identify their bodies – human life is reduced to data. The algorithms used to analyse bio-

“I turned on the stove and waited until the burners were hot.
Then I placed all 10 fingers on them.
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metric data are often prone to error – especially in the case of people of colour, women* and people with disabilities, they often fail. Apart from that, the measurement itself can be faulty due to damaged sensors or “ambient conditions”¹²⁵ such as lighting and temperature. After the data has been recorded, a person’s measured body ages and changes, e.g. due to operations or diseases.¹²⁶ Again and again, people engage in self-mutilation to prevent their own biometric data from being handed over to state authorities so they can create their own identities and do not have to accept classification from state authorities, such as Hassan, who, by burning his fingers, prevented himself from being classified as a “Dublin Case” and thus having to leave Sweden. Hito Steyerl hit the nail on the head: “[I]dentity is the name of the battlefield over your code.”¹²⁷ Unlike taking a facial image, the taking of fingerprints presupposes a certain willingness to cooperate on the “battlefield” of identity determination on the part of the persons involved. If cooperation is not granted, security authorities repeatedly resort to coercion. But the example of the British Border Force union shows that some border guards prefer to avoid this direct form of force – which does not mean that they question



Source: Martin Thoeni, wikipedia, (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Hermes 900 type drone from Elbit.

the violence of the border regime as a whole. When the British government announced plans in 2021 to resume compulsory fingerprinting, the Border Force union fought back. Such a procedure was introduced by Theresa May back in 2012, but was soon scrapped after the Border Force union objected. Lucy Moreton of the Immigration Services Union said: “There was a spate of individuals who self-mutilated in order not to give their fingerprints, either cutting or even burning their fingertips. [...] It was horrible, so we do not want to see a repeat of that. And of course, if you force people to give fingerprints in that way, they are going to fight back”¹²⁸ Apart from the people who refuse to give their biometric data, there are also those who refuse to feed the data into Eurodac. In Greece, border officials would not register fingerprints on a large scale for years – and in 2015, officials registered the fingerprints of only 8% of the people who arrived.¹²⁹ In response, Frontex deployed its own officers in 2016 to identify people on the move through the fingerprinting process in Moria.

Satellites

The satellites used to monitor and choreograph migration movements were not originally designed to track and analyse migration movements. Frontex uses satellite images from EMSA and the Copernicus project:

“The programme is managed by the European Commission, and implemented in partnership with the member states and other organisations, including the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). Copernicus is served by a set of dedicated satellites (the Sentinels) and contributing missions (existing commercial and public satellites). Copernicus services address six main thematic areas: Security; Land Monitoring; Marine Monitoring; Atmosphere Monitoring; Emergency Monitoring; and Climate Change.” EMSA distinguishes between two main categories of Earth observation data: Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) data and optical data. The disadvantage of optical data is that its production is hampered by bad weather, cloud cover and nighttime darkness.¹³⁰ The SAR sensors can take images regardless of the time of day and weather conditions thanks to their radar frequencies, but these images create “two-dimensional spectra of the surface waves of the sea”¹³¹ or the land surface: “By measuring the roughness of the sea surface, certain features stand out against the background; for example, vessels appear as bright spots, while oil spills appear as dark shapes.”¹³² Further limitations concern the resolution or the size of the captured area on the image: “There is always a trade-off between the size of the image and the resolution available. Large images are good for monitoring wide areas, but can only detect features of over a certain

size. To get more detail, the area captured has to be much smaller.” They are always image details either the captured area is large, which means that objects or even people are not shown in detail, or it is small, but details can be seen in the captured area. In the former case, one is more likely to see what is going on in the surroundings and recognise conspicuous spots, and in

Drone crashes occur time and again including as part of migration surveillance. In January 2020, a long-range drone of the type "Hermes 900" crashed during take-off on Crete.

the latter case, one will see a conspicuous spot up close or even miss it because the selected area is better resolved and reveals more details, but it is too small.

The EMSA description states: “[T]he Copernicus Maritime Surveillance service provides timely, relevant, and targeted information to member states and EU bodies.” Accordingly, there is no running picture in real time here either, as the satellites move in orbit and collect data while circling their orbit – the frequency of the new recordings depends on the number of satellites in orbit. The recordings alone are not enough, but are much rather designed to complement other maritime surveillance services – “[a]dding a Copernicus component to maritime surveillance services enriches the overall picture and enables users to undertake more in-depth analyses.”

Drones

The usability of drones depends on their model or weight: In general, weather conditions severely limit the usability of lightweight and low-flying drones in particular. These include: strong winds, rain, snow and hail. In 2017, the then Spanish Interior Minister Juan Ignacio Zoido announced his intention to use drones to monitor the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. A short time later, the Spanish government abandoned the plan due to the strong easterly wind Levante.¹³³ The topographical nature of the area of operation can also

present an insurmountable challenge. Looking at the evaluation of the use of drone technology by the Border Patrol in the US, concerns about the viability seem valid: “Although CBP often comes close to or exceeds its flight-hour goals, its Predators were airborne only 6.4 percent of available hours per year from 2013 to 2016 – on average just 1 hour and 35 minutes per day.

[...] A Predator B drone engine cannot regularly handle its maximum flight of 20 hours; even 6 or 7 hours of operation per day would cut at least 15 years off the 20-year lifespans of such engines.”¹³⁴

Drone crashes occur time and again including as part of migration surveillance. In January 2020, a long-range drone of the type “Hermes 900” crashed during take-off on Crete. It was controlled by the Israeli armament company Elbit resp. the Portuguese main contractor CeiiA¹³⁵ on behalf of the EU border agency Frontex. This was most likely due to either a malfunction in the propulsion system or human error. As Ben Hayes, Chris Jones and Eric Töpfer pointed out in their study “Eurodrones Inc”, drones seem to crash frequently.¹³⁶ Other difficulties include “the lack of stable connection, especially under challenging natural causes [...], in cold weathers, the batteries’ life span is reduced, leading to a shorter flying time, as well as possible malfunctioning [...] Moreover, extreme heat conditions can lead to engine failure, bringing the drone down. Also, the battery could explode and cause serious damage and harm”¹³⁷

Turbulence of data mobilities

Data produced by drones, satellites or reports from border guards as part of the EU’s European border surveillance are analysed in the “information infrastructures”. These include Eurosur and the Joint Operation Reporting Application (JORA), which since 2011 “provides Frontex and its internal and external stakeholders (Member States, other EU institutions and authorities) with the capability of sending, verifying, retrieving, visualizing and, in general, managing operational-related data during the entire cycle of the operations coordinated by Frontex.”¹³⁸

Silvan Pollozek points to “sources of turbulence [...] characteristic of data mobilities” and “problematizes the taken-for-grantedness of smooth, and real-time data processing, which all too often forms the basis of both enthusiastic and dystopian visions of real-time governance of migrant mobilities through technological



Source: Defensie, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

A Dutch Dornier 228 in FRONTEX service.

means.”¹³⁹ Pollozek emphasises: “However, it cannot be taken for granted that data flows smoothly like a ‘global movement of weightless bits at the speed of light’, making everything and everyone ‘always-everywhere available’ through opaque algorithms and a gigantic mass of information. Considering the complex and heterogeneous landscape of European border control, all the devices, information systems, sensors, platforms, and other technologies which have to be interlinked, and all the communication and information channels between authorities which have to be installed, the project of a ‘common monitoring and information sharing environment’ appears to be a complex and challenging endeavor loaded with overflows, frictions, and ongoing controversies.”¹⁴⁰ Pollozek estimates that uploading a report to JORA can take 24 hours or even longer. The Frontex officers’ reports must first be written and checked by three control bodies – a process that takes time. One difficulty is the interplay between different systems. However, if data cannot be used as a “real-time” situation picture, it can at least be used to draw up a risk analysis for the future in order to better assess migration movements.¹⁴¹

"However, it cannot be taken for granted that data flows smoothly like a ‘global movement of weightless bits at the speed of light’, making everything and everyone ‘always-everywhere available’ through opaque algorithms and a gigantic mass of information."

5. The Profiteers

As part of the resistance against efforts to further seal off and militarise the EU's external borders, there have been various initiatives and studies that document and in some cases map companies and institutes that profit from this process. Based on the so-called "Frontex files", the Informationsstelle Militarisation and others, in cooperation with the Migration Control project, are attempting to compile a detailed list of these actors. The following representative overview of the various actors resulted from the initial research for this list (see <https://migration-control.info/wiki/border-business>), which is to be continuously expanded and updated as a collaborative project. Anyone who would like to participate can write to contact@migration-control.info.

This list represents an attempt to aggregate existing activist and journalistic research and make it accessible: "We are by no means the only ones to compile information on this topic, but can draw on extensive work by organisations like Statewatch and the Transnational Institute, by individuals like Mark Akkerman and Matthias Monroy, as well as activists and movements who often also research who profits from the border business at the local level. Suffice it to name just one representative example: the brochure *Border Profiteers* by the NoBorderAssembly for Berlin."¹⁴²

Major defence companies

The well-known European defence behemoths such as Airbus, Thales, Leonardo and Indra are repeatedly cited as central actors in the militarisation of the borders. Particularly well represented are defence companies that are also active in the aerospace sector. For a number of reasons, these companies usually have close ties to the state: For one thing, the existence of an independent aerospace industry is traditionally in the interest of larger and more powerful states, which, despite all talk of European integration, have defended their home-grown version of it to this day against takeovers and the concomitant transfer of technology to other countries. Also, aerospace products necessitate enormous and long-term investments, which the private sector can neither afford nor guarantee in the long term. And lastly, the products of these companies are still primarily aimed at state institutions and authorities such as the military. All four of these companies – Airbus, Thales, Leonardo and Indra – are ultimately testament to the competitive supremacy of the respective governments supporting them in Berlin, Paris, Rome and Madrid.

At the same time, these companies have strategically lobbied for the reorientation of the defence industry and the creation of a single European market for the security

industry, participating in the relevant associations and lobbying organisations. They (and their subsidiaries) have been among the main beneficiaries of numerous EU research projects involving large-scale surveillance of areas through sensor networks, satellite-based communication infrastructure and corresponding evaluation systems. While these projects were oftentimes specifically concerned with the surveillance of the external borders, in many cases very similar technologies were also being researched by the same actors with the objective of monitoring the environment or fighting terrorism, and were funded by the EU Commission. Leonardo (and its subsidiary Selex), Thales and Indra, for example, were involved in the SOBCAH project in 2005, which is considered a major milestone in the development of Eurosur

It is noteworthy that the vast majority of the big defence companies taking part in the militarisation of Europe's borders actually do originate from the EU.

as a “system of systems” for data exchange in border surveillance. Selex, EADS (now Airbus) and Thales, under the leadership of the medium-sized German defence company ESG, were subsequently (2008) commissioned with the technical definition of this system. Beyond the components for satellite-based sensors and communication, the aforementioned large companies – also based on their experience with defence projects – offer system integration, i.e. the planning of large and complex systems with many state-of-the-art subsystems and guarantee their interoperability on the basis of protocols that are often kept under strict secrecy.

Other than that, companies like Airbus, Thales and Leonardo are also active in various segments, which originally produced primarily for the defence market, but have increasingly expanded into the homeland security sector. For example, both Airbus and Leonardo have their own subcontractors for the production of (military) helicopters, used increasingly by coastguards, border guards and police authorities. Airbus is also active in the drone market and operates drones made by the Israeli manu-

facturer IAI on behalf of the German Armed Forces. Airbus has also applied for a contract from Frontex with a corresponding operator model. In addition, Airbus is developing various pseudo-satellites or aerostats – light aircraft, balloons or zeppelins that can remain in the air for months at a time and monitor areas largely on their own – a technology for which Frontex has shown keen interest. Ground radars, which Airbus and Thales have so far produced mainly for the military, are now also being offered in slightly modified configurations for border protection and are sometimes exported by the EU and member states, especially to North Africa. EADS, the predecessor of Airbus, was also involved in several of the research projects previously mentioned, which were designed to imitate the capabilities of sniffer dogs for border protection. Another example of how the traditional arms industry expanded its product range to get in on the border enhancement business is the French arms company Safran. Safran was also primarily active in the aerospace sector, but in the shape of Sagem (later Morpho, today: Idemia) it created a sub-company that specialised in biometric systems and cooperated closely with Frontex.

It is noteworthy that the vast majority of the big defence companies taking part in the militarisation of Europe's borders actually do originate from the EU. Notable exceptions include the Turkish defence company Aselsan and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) as one of the world's leading drone manufacturers.

Capital and consulting companies

In many areas, large consulting firms (many of which started out as auditing firms and are still referred to as such today) act as the driving forces behind digitalisation. This also applies – in more than one way – to the digitalisation of borders. On the one hand, they act in a function that is not dissimilar to think tanks by publishing brochures and studies on their own initiative in which they formulate requirements for modern border management and proposals for its implementation. At the same time, they are often in close contact with ministries and authorities and are involved on their behalf in the conception and sometimes even the small-scale implementation of corresponding policies. As in other policy areas, large-scale projects pertaining to border management are hardly conceivable without the involvement of consultancies. Recently, consulting firms have expanded their portfolios beyond the original business of auditing

and consulting, often through strategic acquisitions in recent years, and now offer products of their own in the areas of aerospace, systems integration, data management and analysis etc.

The company Deloitte is a perfect illustration of this. Deloitte has been a close partner of the notorious US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency for years although it often remains unclear what the company's services actually consist of. The "Government & Public Services" business unit on Deloitte's homepage contains extensive studies on "The future of law enforcement", on "Smart City / Smart Nation" and on current trends in the defence industry. To date, there is also a "report" on the topic of "Smart Borders", which proposes four principles to governments in order to according to the subtitle of the report – "[increase] security without sacrificing mobility". Borders are described as an "ecosystem for shared decision making and real-time collaboration that empower government and industry to work together to create safer, more standard and cost effective perimeters." Attached to the report is a kind of advertising flyer for the "Smart Border Analytics Tool", which the group offers and which, based on the analysis of big data and geographical information systems, is supposed to contribute to the understanding of border traffic, the analysis of risk profiles and the operational decision-making of authorities. In addition, Deloitte states that it has also worked for Frontex, among many other EU authorities and agencies, assisting in the agency's expansion, including through business process modelling to optimize the organisation of its human resources. What has been shown here using the example of Deloitte also holds true for other large "auditing companies" such as Accenture and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

In addition to the big players, there are numerous other consulting companies of all shapes and sizes. There are, for instance, many medium-sized companies with a few dozen to several hundred employees that advise public authorities or organisations that house and administer refugees on setting up their IT infrastructure. Finally, there are also very small consultancies that have been commissioned, for example, with studies on technological trends (in border management), were involved in EU research projects on border management, or in other ways promote the exchange of "stakeholders" from industry, science, authorities and NGOs, such as by organising conferences.

The company Civipol has a special role, as it is also a kind of public authority. Forty per cent of the shares are held by the French state, which founded the company to provide technical services to the Ministry of the Interior (which are usually provided by secret services). At the same time, Civipol is conceptually involved in almost all aspects of "migration management" – from border surveillance and biometric registration to questions of the asylum process and naturalisation. In recent years, Civipol has expanded its client base to include other governments and also advises NGOs on activities in third countries. On behalf of France and the EU, Civipol advises on legislative processes in so-called countries of origin and transit.

In addition to consulting firms, corporate enterprises that primarily act as investors should also be mentioned here. For example, the electronics division of the Airbus Group – which is involved in numerous aspects of border

IT companies no longer make money primarily from the sale of end devices, but from providing and operating the software and cloud services used by the client.

surveillance – was spun off as Hensoldt AG and has since been majority-owned by the US investment company KKR & Co. Morpho/Idemia, the aforementioned former subsidiary of the Safran group specialising in biometrics, is now also majority-owned by the private equity fund Advent International. Since numerous start-ups have also become involved in border management, developing and providing analytical tools in the context of digitalisation, recent years have seen an increasing interest of venture capital funds to focus on and invest in this area.

IT Companies

The range of IT companies involved in militarising the borders is also immense. In some cases, the boundaries to the above mentioned consulting companies are rather blurred, because many companies that actually made their name as producers of hardware – such as HP and IBM – now generate a large part of their turnover with

planning and consulting services, maintenance and service contracts. They no longer make money primarily from the sale of end devices, but from providing and operating the software and cloud services used by the client.

A classic example of this in the European context would be Atos. Atos resulted from the merger of a Belgian and two French IT companies in the late 1990s and has since developed through numerous further acquisitions and mergers into the most important European provider of cloud services. Acquisitions since the beginning of the millennium include parts of the consulting firm KPMG, the service divisions of XEROX and Siemens (IT Solutions & Services), and Bull, a manufacturer specialising in large-scale computing systems. In addition, Atos (under the leadership of the current EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry Breton) has benefited extensively from EU research programmes aimed at large-scale surveillance and automated big data analysis. Atos was able to gain early experience with corresponding applications in border protection in the early 2000s through its participation in SIVE (Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior), which was to keep the Spanish Guardia Civil at all times informed about the situation at the borders by means of radar and thermal image sensors on the coasts. In the meantime, Atos independently offers complete packages for the monitoring of land, air and sea borders – including the VIGIA Border Monitoring System, which is offered to both military and civilian authorities. According to its own information, the company is involved in the monitoring of more than 2,000 kilometres of coastline.¹⁴³ Atos also offers small-scale components of the migration regime, including software that uses artificial intelligence or mathematical minimisation to identify the dialect of refugees and thus provide information about their “true origin”.

Smaller and less well-known is the French IT company Sopra Steria, which nevertheless employs over 45,000 people and was for example involved in the development of the Schengen Information System (SIS) and the Visa Information System (VIS). It is therefore hardly surprising to find Sopra Steria figuring as cybersecurity partner of the Ecos Consortium, which in March 2021 concluded a framework contract worth 442 million euros with Frontex and the EU database agency eu-LISA, covering the modernisation and operation of the Eurodac, VIS and SIS II databases.

Also involved in the Ecos Consortium is the Munich-based IT service provider Cancom, which with its roughly 4,000 employees usually has much smaller fish to fry. It is responsible for planning the IT infrastructure of the

two EU capacity-building missions (EUCAP) in Mali and Niger, which consist of building up and training gendarmerie and border guard units. On a somewhat lower level, a local market leader is currently emerging in the shape of King ICT from Croatia, a company which on the one hand assists border protection authorities in the former Yugo-Slavia in their use of drones, and on the other hand is responsible for modernising the collection of registration data in Bosnia and Herzegovina to enable the (non-)issuing of biometric ID cards. In Germany, an even smaller company, Cevisio Software und Systeme, received special attention for its software “Cevisio QMM” (neighbourhood management), which was granted the Big Brother Award in the category Administration in 2018: The software was used by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to subject the inmates of camps and collective accommodation to strict digital control.

Sensors

Among the main beneficiaries of techno-militarised border surveillance, are, of course, the suppliers of sensor technology. One of the biggest players – Airbus’s former defence electronics unit, rebranded Hensoldt – has already been mentioned. Another technology that has found a ready market in recent years, both in the military sector (equipping satellites, drones and helicopters) and in border protection, is FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared). It enables quite high-resolution images to be taken and processed over long distances by day and night and has been installed or retrofitted on many platforms (stationary and mobile, land-, air- and sea-based) in recent years. The world’s most important supplier was and is the company FLIR Systems, which was bought by the US defence company Teledyne for 8 billion US dollars in 2021.

In the case of body scanners based on terahertz sensors, which have largely replaced traditional metal detectors in recent years and are increasingly being used in other areas besides border protection, there is also a clear market leader in Smiths Detection (formerly Siemens, then Rheinmetall, penultimately Smiths Heilmann) alongside various other suppliers. In addition to the familiar access controls at airports, systems are increasingly being offered that can screen entire containers or trucks.

Sensor technology is an area in which small start-ups often bring new technologies to the market. One example is the company Science for Humanity (S4H) from Belgium, which offers heartbeat detectors for stationary and mobile use. They are used at borders and

ports to detect people hidden in freight traffic. They are also said to be suitable for the protection of “critical infrastructures” such as military bases. Another example is the Israeli company Seraphim Optronics, founded by former members of the Israeli military, which presented its product lines “Ariel”, “Raphael” and “Gabriel” at a Frontex event (presumably in May 2018). Their core competence is in the field of image sensors that can monitor areas over a long period of time without having to be operated and maintained.

Analytics

In analytics, too, it is smaller start-ups, alongside the large defence, consulting and IT companies, that develop new products and launch them on the market – often in the expectation that they will be taken over by the former if they succeed. Analytics in this context means the automated linking and evaluation of data sets and sensor data. The companies, which are often still completely unknown, make promises that are difficult to verify with reference to new technologies such as machine learning or mathematical minimisation.

One example of such a start-up is Travizory Border Security from Switzerland. According to its own information, it has access to “databases with lost or stolen passports and databases on persons wanted by organisations such as the FBI, the CIA, the United Nations or Interpol”. In addition, 50 countries, airports and airlines use its services to certify travellers as “safe” – or not. The Israeli start-up Windward analyses (mostly publicly available) data on shipping traffic to create risk profiles and has made its software available to Frontex – initially on a trial basis for 800,000 euros, later for 2.6 million euros over a one-year period. Pandora Intelligence is also a start-up that touts itself as a provider of “the latest generation of analysis software to Law-enforcement agencies, Governments and ministries, News agencies, Intelligence services, Military organisations and Safety regions”. It also presented its supposed capabilities for scenario-based forecasting of migration movements at a Frontex event.

Platforms and autonomous systems

Not only must the respective intervention forces get to the place of their deployment, but also the sensor technology. For this purpose, the sensors are often mounted on mobile platforms. These can be classic military ve-

hicles such as infantry fighting vehicles. Such vehicles are manufactured by Rheinmetall or the Turkish defence company Otokar. Mercedes Sprinter vehicles are used as platforms for local surveillance and operations control centres. These vehicles are sold as MURUS (Multi-role Operations Support Vehicles) by the German company Elettronica GmbH, for example. However, smaller companies are also interested in this business, such as Hartmann Spezialkarosserien GmbH from Alsfeld, which, according to Frontex files, applied for a matching contract at one of the EU border protection agency’s “Industry Days”. In general, vehicles from almost every manufacturer (including VW, Fiat, Nissan, Toyota and others) are also used by police and border guard units and are offered in corresponding versions.

As with car manufacturers, however, the general rule for boat manufacturers is that most companies also offer their boats in versions destined for coast guard and police use – and many are currently experimenting with converting them for unmanned use.

In addition, unmanned aerial vehicles are also used extensively in European border protection. In addition to the major defence companies such as Airbus and IAI, recent years have seen the emergence of new players that have at the very least benefited from the recent border enhancement, or perhaps owe their very existence to it. One example is the Portuguese company TEKEVER, which was only founded in 2000 and at times describes itself as the market leader in the field of unmanned systems for security applications. It certainly owes this position to its participation in several EU research projects (including ROBORDER) and a contract from the European Maritime

Safety Agency (EMSA), which cooperates closely with Frontex. The French company A-NSE was only established in 2010 and specialises in the use of zeppelins and balloons as surveillance platforms. A Zeppelin from A-NSE was deployed in 2019 as part of Frontex's Operation Poseidon on the Turkish-Greek border. The company is also endeavouring to deploy its products in the Sahel region.

In addition, unmanned land systems are also used in the enhancement of the border or at least are being further developed under specific scenarios. Corresponding EU research projects took place in 2008–2012 under the title TALOS (Transportable Autonomous Patrol for Land Order Surveillance) and in 2017–2021 under the name ROBORDER (autonomous swarm of heterogeneous Robots for BORDER surveillance). The Polish institute PIAP, which also manufactures and sells numerous robots for military and police forces worldwide, was also involved in TALOS. These robots are supplied with extensive sensor technology in their basic configuration, but some can also pick up and use grenade launchers and rifles. The Turkish defence company Aselsan was also involved in TALOS and offers combat robots. One of the companies involved in ROBORDER was the small Spanish company Robotnik Automation from Valencia, which, despite having only about 30 employees, claims to have sold 4,700 robots in over 50 countries. As far as can be told, these are mainly models for civilian and industrial applications.

As with many other research projects and experiments, the coordinated use of unmanned systems on land, in the air and at sea is also being tested within the framework of ROBORDER. Unmanned underwater vehicles are offered, among others, by the Portuguese company OceanScan MST, which was founded in 2008 and is involved in ROBORDER. A much larger project, Ocean2020, funded by the European Armaments Agency, involved the Spanish company Seadrone, only founded in 2016, and the British manufacturer AutoNaut as manufacturers of unmanned water vehicles. As with car manufacturers, however, the general rule for boat manufacturers is that most companies also offer their boats in versions destined for coast guard and police use – and many are currently experimenting with converting them for unmanned use. Since underwater drones are not dissimilar to torpedoes, you will find not only very young companies but also well-known manufacturers of maritime weapon systems such as the French Naval Group or Atlas Elektronik from Germany, both of which now also market their products for border protection and harbour surveillance.¹⁴⁴

The profiteers in your own city

In order to locate profiteers in a certain city, the following databases and campaign sites can be helpful, in addition to the studies mentioned above.

Campaign pages:

AbolishFrontex compiles information, action materials and announcements of days of action on the campaign website:

<https://abolishfrontex.org>

Helpful information from the EU:

CORDIS (Community Research and Development Information Service) is the Commission's database of all EU-funded research and innovation projects (such as Horizon 2020). It also lists the partners involved in each project.

<https://cordis.europa.eu>

Funding & tender opportunities publishes open calls for EU contracts, e.g. from Horizon Europe, which are currently under the header Border Management 2021 as well as a list of interested companies: <https://ec.europa.eu>

TED (Tenders Electronic Daily) publishes EU contracts. Here you can also filter by the names of institutions or companies involved (e.g. Frontex, Université de Strasbourg or even Airbus) or by municipality.

<https://ted.europa.eu/TED/main/HomePage.do>

Helpful information from a critical perspective:

Open Security Data Europe provides information on EU spending on security.

<https://opensecuritydata.eu>

LobbyFacts makes it easy to search for lobbying activities in EU institutions.

<https://lobbyfacts.eu>

6. Protests and resistance

The world was born yearning to be a home for everyone.

Eduardo Galeano¹⁴⁵

**We live together,
we struggle together.
Solidarity will win!**

City Plaza Hotel

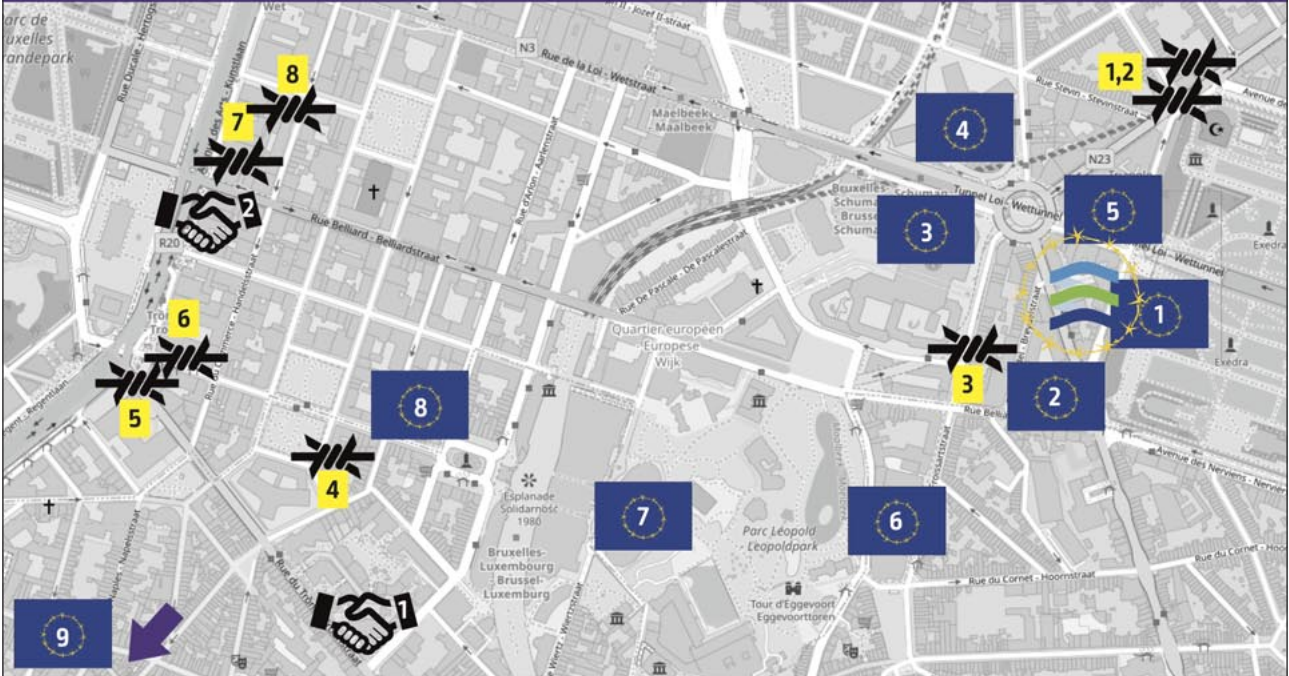
Numerous protests are directed against the portrayal of migrants as a threat and against border profiteers in the EU. In June 2021, the #AbolishFrontex campaign was launched with the participation of numerous organisations from different EU member states. The campaign’s demands go beyond the abolition of the European Coast and Border Guard: “Abolish Frontex, Regularise Migrants, Stop all deportations, End detention, Stop the militarisation of borders [and the military industrial complex], Stop the surveillance of people on the move, Empower solidarity, Stop the EU’s role in forcing people to move, Freedom of movement for all, End the EU border regime”. Each point is broken down into further more detailed demands, so the call for the abolition of the military-industrial complex is followed by the addition: “Stop framing security as meaning the militarisation of society and stop framing migration as a security threat. Stop the use of militaristic language, such as ‘combatting’ irregular migration”¹⁴⁶

The “military-research-industrial complex”¹⁴⁷ influences EU policy-making when it comes to unlocking new markets and accessing data. This does not go unchallenged: Resistance to the “security industry” or the military-research (security-)industrial complex has been stirring for a long time and seems destined to grow. One prominent example is AbolishFrontex, which has made it (part of) its mission to map border profiteers in different cities, including research institutes, thus identifying potential venues of protest. Furthermore, academia and civil society are increasingly turning their attention to border profiteers. As of today, both academics and activists have published numerous studies on this topic. Among the pioneers were those activists of Calais Migrant Solidarity, Corporate Watch and Passeurs d’Hospitalités who jointly created the Calais Research Network. In 2016, they published a list of 40 companies that profited from border militarisation and the evictions and demolition of the so-called “Jungle”.¹⁴⁸

“Science for the people”

There have already been protests against the cooperation between arms companies and research institutions. As early as 2010, the “Initiative ziviles Bremen” fought against the militarisation of civilian research and denounced its integration into the EU border re-

ABOLISH FRONTEx



The companies & institutions driving and profiting from Fortress Europe

FRONTEx - THE DEADLY EUROPEAN BORDER AGENCY

1. Avenue d'Auderghem, 20



ARMS & SECURITY COMPANIES

1. Thales: Avenue de Cortenberg, 60
2. Serco: Avenue de Cortenberg, 60
3. Indra: Rue Froissart, 95
4. Rheinmetall: Square de Meeûs, 21
5. Airbus Group: Avenue Marnix, 28
6. SAAB: Rue du Luxembourg, 3
7. Leonardo (Finmeccanica): Avenue des Arts, 43
8. Hensoldt: Rue Guimard, 7



ARMS INDUSTRY LOBBY GROUPS

1. Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD): Rue du Trône, 100
2. European Organisation for Security (EOS): Avenue des Arts, 46



EU INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES



1. EU-LISA - European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems and European Asylum Support Office: Avenue d'Auderghem, 20
2. DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) and DG Defence: Avenue d'Auderghem, 45
3. Council of the EU: Rue de la Loi, 175
4. European Commission: Rue de la Loi, 200
5. European External Action Service: Rond point Schuman, 9A
6. Albert Borschette Conference Centre: Rue Froissart, 36
7. European Parliament: Rue Wiertz, 43
8. DG Migration and Home Affairs: Rue du Luxembourg, 46
9. European Defence Agency: Rue des Drapiers 17/23 (off map)

END THE EU BORDER REGIME

gime: “We, members of universities, researchers and students, employees of scientific institutes and environmental associations, citizens, are worried. Worried that environmental research is increasingly becoming a fig leaf for military and border surveillance interests.”¹⁴⁹ In the Netherlands, Stop the War on Migrants protested in February 2018 at the Technical University in Delft against the cooperation with two arms giants, Thales and Airbus, who work with the university on research and development of new technologies.¹⁵⁰ In March of that year, an event in France with the then director of Frontex’s legal department led to protests at the University of Grenoble Alpes.¹⁵¹ The event and the police violence against the protests prompted the founding of the Groupe Grothendieck¹⁵², which first dealt in detail with the intertwining of the military, the (security) industry and the university in a brochure. For example, the university cooperates with Thales and Airbus Defence and Space. Groupe Grothendieck ana-

With the dividing lines between security industry and arms industry becoming increasingly blurred, the call to end war is often heard in conjunction with the call to end the EU border regime.

lyses the role of universities as follows: “In a capitalism dominated by so-called “contracting cycles”, R&D and digital technologies enable the countries that drive global economic dynamics to accumulate power and capital. In this context, universities play a key role in that they are initiating and restarting cycles. Research, renewal of the means of production (“innovation”) and the training of a highly qualified workforce are the effective means for states and their strategic enterprises to be and remain competitive.”¹⁵³ Similar criticism is voiced by the alliance against ‘Cyber Valley’ in Tübingen. In a 2018 call for a rally entitled “Science for the people not for industry, surveillance and war”, the alliance states: “We reject the Cyber Valley project because it stands for a research policy in the service of industry and armament, instrumentalising science in the process and ultimately threatening its very existence. By the

same token, we are not prepared to bear the consequences of Cyber Valley for the city, actual ecosystems, individual and social freedom.”¹⁵⁴ Cyber Valley is an alliance of state research institutions, the automotive industry, defence companies (ZF-Friedrichshafen and NEC) and Amazon it is to become the largest European “ecosystem” for research into artificial intelligence.

War and border start here - let’s stop them here!

The perhaps sharpest resistance within recent years was motivated by German arms giant Rheinmetall, with numerous protests in Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Criticism of Rheinmetall was sparked by the images of Leopard 2 tanks (fitted with smoothbore guns made by Rheinmetall) rolling into Afrin as part of Turkey’s illegal invasion and also by the bombs fired by the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition on Yemen. In Germany, the “War starts here” camps against the Gefechtsübungszentrum (GÜZ) in the Altmark region were followed by “Disarm Rheinmetall” camps between 2017-2019 near the company’s facility in Unterlüß. In the meantime, several more days of action and blockades, for example in Kassel, as well as protests in front of the corporate headquarters in Düsseldorf and other sites have taken place. In Sardinia, the Stop RWM (Rheinmetall Waffe Munition) campaign is mobilising against the local Rheinmetall bomb manufacturing plant. The annual

Rheinmetall shareholder meetings in May in Berlin have also been a long-standing focus of the protest movement – the annual Airbus shareholder meeting in April 2018 at the Okura Hotel in Amsterdam was also held under protest.¹⁵⁵

No cheers for the security industry

The Federation of Afghan Refugees in the Netherlands (FAVON) also denounced Airbus in an open letter published in March 2018, following a speech by an Airbus employee at Leiden University. While their call for a boycott went largely unheeded,¹⁵⁶ it is worth putting pressure on the companies and their partners, be it a research institution or a cultural association. In the same year, Stop the War on Migrants addressed a letter

to several associations and cultural institutions “to ask them to drop their sponsor relationship with Thales”, seeing that this arms company “contributes to wars, repression and violence against refugees” with its military and security products which received positive feedback.¹⁵⁷ There are a number of successful examples of art galleries and festivals cancelling the cooperation of sponsors from the arms and security industries. In 2017, BAE Systems withdrew as sponsor of the British festival “The Great Exhibition of the North” in reaction to pressure from artists, cultural workers and activists speaking out against “artwashing”¹⁵⁸ and in 2012, thanks to the Campaign Against Arms Trade and the campaign ‘Disarm the Gallery’, the British National Gallery terminated its cooperation with sponsor Finameccanica (now Leonardo), a company that also profits from border surveillance.¹⁵⁹

Social movements and trade unions moving closer together

With the dividing lines between security industry and arms industry becoming increasingly blurred due to the growing importance of cyber security, automation, artificial intelligence (mathematical minimisation) and “digital borders” (as evidenced by the fact that arms companies are among the major border profiteers), the call to end war is often heard in conjunction with the call to end the EU border regime. In October 2021, for

example, there will be another anti-militarist march for the conversion of the Soietxe barracks in the Spanish Basque Country. The group is opposing, among other things, the use of the port of Bilbao for the arms trade. At the same time, it is demonstrating against the border profiteers and is taking “the opportunity to call for a permanent mobilisation against the culture of fear and war”.¹⁶⁰ A similar bridge is being built by the CALP, the autonomous collective of the dockers of Genoa, which is fighting against the arms trade in the port of Genoa and for the opening of the ports for people on the move. In fact, the dockers of Genoa are not alone in their political struggle. The NGO Weapon Watch sees the protests and strikes “in the ports of Genoa, Livorno, Naples, Ravenna, Le Havre, Antwerp, Santander and Oakland”¹⁶¹ as an “international success of the boycott of ships carrying weapons of war, in particular to Yemen and Palestine, supported even by the Pope [...]”.¹⁶² Weapon Watch’s mission statement reads: “We must and want to monitor the weapons that pass through the ports, both to make their presence visible and known, because the dockworkers and crew on the ships do not like to handle such high-risk goods, which always pass undisturbed, even as migrants the first victims of the weapons we export to their countries are prevented from disembarking.”¹⁶³ The protests in the ports could often be described as an amalgamation of trade unions, peace organisations and human rights organisations.



Source: CALP

CALP: "Put an end to weapons in the port of Genoa."

Security industry creates borders, climate change, environmental degradation, colonial structures, complicity and war

The profiteers of the EU border regime can serve as a focal point for various protest movements: Not only does the “security industry”, by techno-militarising the EU border regime, compel migrants to seek more perilous routes and to submit to inhumane forms of digital and biometric control, it is also one of the major emitters of CO2. Digitalisation or biometrics and the AI applications that are increasingly being used require rare raw materials such as bauxite, lithium and coltan. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the material reality behind the “digital frontiers” and the trend towards unmanned vehicles and aircraft in migration surveillance: These technologies require raw material extraction that often goes hand in hand with severe environmental degradation and the dislocation of indigenous populations, as in the Atacama Desert¹⁶⁴, or with the creation of hazardous working environments where forced and child labour flourish, as in the coltan mines in Congo. The portrayal of people on the move as a security threat and their biometric measurement perpetuates a dehumanising policy that has its origins in colonialism. To reduce human life to data is to reproduce colonial thinking and is reflective of a mindset that sees social and (environmental) political problems as a threat to be countered by techno-militarisation.

The effects of dehumanising EU migration policies are also felt in the labour sector, for example in agriculture, the intensification of which is made possible by the exploitation of the labour of disenfranchised migrants. At the same time, the military-research-industrial sector is responsible for the militarisation of research institutions and the logistics chain of global goods transport. This is where protesting dockworkers’



Poster from the demonstration against arms trade

unions are playing a model role, given that dockworkers overwhelmingly refuse to be part of the war machine and are politically opposed to becoming accomplices.

It should be in the interest of different movements to stand united against the arms and security industry, to expose their complicity in the dehumanisation that is the mark of the EU’s migration policy and to collec-

tively rethink our understanding of “security”. The “security industry” poses a security problem by looting and robbing to paraphrase Naomi Klein much-needed state funds in order to profit from the racist, colonial and environmentally damaging techno-militarisation of the EU border regime of which it is the driving force. The security industry cannot be part of a solution to social and political problems. The looted and plundered resources and state funds are direly needed in the health sector, in education, in social housing, in cultural institutions, for climate protection measures and civil disaster protection.

Eduardo Galeano once described utopia as follows: “Utopia is on the horizon. I move two steps closer; it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I’ll never reach it. So what’s the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking.” The security industry, which propagates a “bleak future” in order to successfully market its product range, paints a highly lucrative dystopia on the horizon. It is about time we deligitimise it as the EU Commission’s „reliable partner“ for planning our collective future and replace its “white papers” with ones that do not instill us with a dystopic vision, but rather with confidence in our ability to create a peaceful, socially just and sustainable society in which people are placed above profit.

The "security industry" poses a security problem by looting and robbing to paraphrase Naomi Klein much-needed state funds in order to profit from the racist, colonial and environmentally damaging techno-militarisation of the EU border regime of which it is the driving force.



Demonstration against the closure of the EU borders. Berlin 2018.

Source: Seebrücke.org

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