

# Assignment: Academic Essay

Central question:

*How open can or must the external borders for migrations of the European Union be?*

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Borders and Identities in Europe, MAN-BCU306

26 October 2021

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Over the last few years, The European Union has become increasingly serious about protecting its external borders. In the strategic agenda for 2019-2024 border protection is the number one priority after the 2019 MEP elections. The results of this can be clearly seen today. The European Union has invested billions of Euro's into protecting its own borders (Akkerman, 2019) and has also increased its planned spending during the next budget period starting this year. A stunning 8 billion euro is earmarked for the IBM fund. This project aims to ensure member states have funds to build and maintain their border management and set visa policies. (Union, 2019) Border fencing is also a much-used tool for border protection. Although the EU does not promote walls, stating that it is not an effective tool, the reality is different. (Baczynska & Ledwith, 2016). Recently multiple member states have also written a letter demanding the EU to be more active in financing border fencing. (Nielsen, 2021) Despite this, examples are plentiful: Poland has recently finished and is now already planning to upgrade its border fencing on the Belarusian border. (Reuters, 2021) Lithuania has agreed to build a 550-kilometre-long border along the Belarusian border which is estimated to cost around 150 million euro (Jegelevicius, 2021) and Greece has increased its border fencing on the Turkish border to keep out potential Afghan refugees (BBC, 2021). The border fencing industry in Europe is thriving.

These developments fit well in the commonly coined concept "Fortress Europe". (Houtum, Lecture Beyond Fortress Europe, 2021) This terminology aims to encapsulate the idea that Europe has become a fortress with big and high walls. Walls in a literal sense like the fencing as outlined earlier, but also more conceptual walls. The paper wall where the bureaucracy required to enter and live in Europe are driving migrants towards smugglers and other illegal avenues. (Houtum, 2020) The camp wall where, just like it was the case in the past, there are encampments along the fortress's edges. Both temporary and permanently. The main difference between now and then being that these camps contain refugees that live in horrible conditions (EUFRA, 2020), (Ferreira, 2020) waiting for a decision. In the theory these walls are also often referred to as *paper border*, the *iron border*, and the *camp border* and play an important role within the understanding of Europe's policies.

To further understand the mechanisms of “Fortress Europe” one has to also understand the mechanisms in play that in the academic world are referred to as EUrope’s “b/ordering and othering policies”. This term aims to encapsulate policies that influence the migration practices the EU abides by. (Houtum van, 2002) tries to explain the concept further by outlining how others relate to the self: *“Others are needed and therefore constantly produced and reproduced to maintain the cohesion in the formatted order of a territorially demarcated society”*. EUrope on purpose aims to create migration policies that create an “us and them” divide to further drive and ingrain a common European identity. Which then leads to these walls being built higher and higher.

Because language and correct terminology are very important in this sensitive issue and has been misused and abused in the past (Ruz, 2015) It is important to clearly outline what somebody means with migrants. There are a many different types of migration. So, to prevent confusing; this essay will exclusively talk about irregular external migration into the Schengen area of the European Union with a focus on migration from Africa, Eastern Europe, and the middle east. This means the main external borders of interest stretches from Finland in the north following the Schengen area until Greece in the south-east and following the Mediterranean all the way to Spain and Portugal.

In this essay I will review and critically assess the b/ordering and othering policies from EUrope and how they relate to the “fortress Europe” concept. This all to answer the question *“How open can or must the external borders for migration of the European Union be?”* This essay will provide insights in this question and will critically assess six core values the European Union has outlined and enshrined in law.

In news outlets headlines like *“Migrant stream picks up again”* or *“EU flooded with 1,000 asylum seeker applications EVERY day”* (Berlo, 2015) give an image of an impending doom if EUrope does not take drastic measures. Though rarely do you read about the implications on the other side. The number of migrants dying from making the crossing to the European Union is very underreported. (Houtum, 2020). The current situation sees anxieties and fear on both sides. But the policies are set up from the EU citizens perspective and often disregard the need of the migrants. In this essay I argue that the policies are not only problematic for migrants, but also for the whole of EUrope. This because the EU is suffering from a form of autoimmunity whereby many of these policies result in negative and destructive consequences. Which I will explain in more detail with a few consequences that demonstrate this. Although there are more consequences to these policies I could outline, these ones provide a good overview.

Firstly, I would like to outline that these b/ordering and othering policies have been a cause for the many casualties along “Fortress Europe’s” walls. As of now, these walls have become the deadliest border on our planet. It is hard to measure exactly the number of casualties all the way from the paper border, through the fence border and waiting in bad conditions at the camp border. But estimations indicate around 45.000 deaths can be traced back to the bordering policies since 1993. (UNITED, 2021) The cause of death varies greatly depending on where a migrant is on his or her journey. Below I will outline along the 3 borders what policies are responsible for these casualties.

The first border, the paper border, represents the requirement to possess a visa before entering. However, getting a visa can be difficult for multiple reasons; Firstly, these visa policies are not based on individuals or what they can bring, but instead on nativist

grounds (Houtum, 2020). This nativist look at visa policies is for many people a big wall. Countless people have not been lucky in the lottery of birth and are born in countries seen as not favourable by the EU. It also seems like a paradox that a questionable regime that does not want you to flee can easily prevent you from being able to get EU visas. (Houtum, 2020) The paper border will undoubtedly have been a cause for many unknown casualties that were thinking of making the journey to Europe but have opted not to do so due to these policies and have found their death in their own country. This border has also been a cause for migrants to opt for illegal smugglers who say they will bring them to Europe. (Houtum, 2020)

The journey towards the iron border itself is perhaps the most visual and well-known reason of casualties. Everyone can picture the images of the sketchy rubber boats used to attempt to cross the Mediterranean to Greece, Italy, or another EU destination. Other well-known imagery is for example the high and wide fencing infrastructure on Spain's enclave Ceuta in Africa. For smugglers these high fencing and the troublesome paper border provide opportunities for smuggling using rubber boats as tools to move migrants towards Europe. The little security a rubber boat provides is most likely still more security than their home country can offer. Smuggling and therefore also smugglers have seen a massive growth (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2018) over the years and have been indirectly supported and funded by Europe itself. It is odd because Europe wants migrants to enter legally but provides almost no feasible way to do so. The implications of the iron border seem to be that of a negative virtuous cycle. The EU keep tightening their iron borders which, as outlined earlier, is the continual increase in budget and through which the drive to increase the length and height of its walls. This mechanism results in an ever-narrowing path for migrants to walk on. And when a path is too narrow to walk on, people will find other illegal paths to walk on. Which in turn will trigger a response from populist and others to further clamp down on the iron borders. A virtuous Cycle.

Then lastly, the camp borders outside and inside Europe can be described as zoo-like spaces, where little humanity is shown. The Guardian (McIntyre & Rice-Oxley, 2018) summarizes the number of casualties from (UNITED, 2021) after reaching Europe to over 500 in 2018. In this group, the most common cause is suicide. In the list one case is stated as: *"Hanged himself in solitary confinement in detention centre in Turin (IT), did not get medical treatment"*. (UNITED, 2021) These migrants find themselves in something that (Ferrer-Gallardo & Albet-Mas, 2016) describe as a "limboscapes". This limboscapes indicates the idea that these people are stuck in a very uncertain period between Europe and the unsafe place they have travelled from.

It strikes me as insane that Europe is actively and passively responsible for thousands of deaths along its external borders. The three border types all play their own part but a commonality it shares is that Europe does not accept migration is a fact of life and tries to keep migration away from its borders. And by doing so is responsible for these deaths.

As a second consequence on the bordering and othering policies is that these policies have also been noticed by third (neighbouring) countries around Europe. These countries see these policies as opportunities to gain political or economic advantages. Belarus has, for example, been flying migrants in from Iraq and various other countries, where the government promptly puts them on a bus headed to Poland or Lithuania. (Touchtidou, 2021) The Belarussian president Alexander Lukashenko has refused to take

back any migrants crossing into Poland or Lithuania stating that the Belarus will only reconsider its strategy if the European Union decides to lift the sanctions (messmer, 2021) they put in place. An EU commissioner commented on the issue saying that this is not the first time this has happened. And that there have been multiple attempts by third countries to use migrations as a tactic against the European Union. (Martinez, 2021) The union has called these new developments a type of “hybrid war” (Martinez, 2021). Examples of these hybrid wars are plentiful. Morocco has, for example, been using its geographical location to its advantage. The two Spanish enclaves in the African mainland are a leverage tool for Morocco. A professor at the University of Oklahoma City, Mohamed Daadaoui, states that: *“Morocco often resorts to the use of illegal migration as leverage against Spain and the EU. It has been used in the past, notably when Morocco was engaged in a free trade dispute with the EU”* (Martinez, 2021). This is an example to the broader implications that Ruth Ferrero Turrion, Professor Political Science outline: *“The instrument of migratory pressure is always used because it is the most effective way to gain more funds and press hard enough to achieve political objectives”* (Martinez, 2021). The EU is hurting itself both politically and economically by these b/ordering and othering policies through the interaction with third countries on the other side of the border. EUrope keeps attacking itself with its policies and here the main beneficiaries are the bordering regimes and not the EU nor the migrants. An example of the autoimmunity disease EU is suffering from.

The third consequence I would like to outline is the fundamental breach the six core values EUrope has outlined for itself. These core values are enshrined in law under the Article 2 of the Treaty of European Union (European Parliament, 2012). This treaty outlines the following values: *Human dignity, Freedom, Democracy, Equality, Rule of law & Human rights*. Along all six values I will argue that each of these is being ignored, violated, and plainly contradictory with EUrope’s actions with regards to migration and their policies that resulted from it.

Starting with Human dignity. On the website from the European Union, it states that: *“Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected, protected and constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.”* (EU, sd) I am not sure whether to laugh or cry reading this. All along the camp borders very little human dignity is being shown and instead it is degrading human beings. Earlier I mentioned these camps as zoo-like spaces where people are being treated as animals rather than humans. Which, as time has gone on, has become more normal. (Vaughan-Williams, 2014) This development perhaps points to a wider understanding that these migrants are not human and are instead being “animalised” (Vaughan-Williams, 2014). And that, is a very sad and undignified way to view a human being.

The second core value is freedom. Though they could have better re-written this to mean freedom with an asterisk and you would have to read to small print to figure out what it really means. The external borders should be seen as a meeting point where the freedom of EU citizens meets the lack thereof for the others. People are not free to go to EUrope. Instead, many are stuck in complicated visa processes and often can’t get one on nativist grounds (Houtum, 2020).

Democratic values are also left in the wind trying to deal with migration. Questionable regimes are being funded in a desperate attempt to keep the problem away. Turkey has made many worrying changes to its core democratic principles. The Human Rights Watch states that: *“The government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is dismantling human rights protections and democratic norms in Turkey on a scale unprecedented in the 18 years*

*he has been in office*" (HRW, 2021) yet the EU is still very happy doing business with him. So much so that their deal has been extended recently again. The 3 billion deal aims to improve humanitarian situation in the region as well as ensuring migrants can be sent back to Turkey. Though this deal does have effect in curbing the migration it won't be of benefit in the long haul since migrants will attempt to reach Europe via other venues. (Liempt, et al., 2017) So instead of fighting for its democratic values Europe would rather give money to a questionable regime for no real gain.

I have already indirectly talked about equality a lot but principally all bordering and othering policies are promoting in-equality. When you are creating a "them v us" mentality you already promote a form of inequality. Putting migrants in zoo-like camps does also not strike me as equality.

A recently released video (Affairs, 2021) on these six core values mentions for Human Rights that it wants "*Universal rights and fundamental freedoms for all people.*" Amnesty International has written a striking report on "*Human rights violations along Fortress Europe*" and to get an idea it is 40 pages long. It outlines various issues in Europe's approach and often complete lack of human rights safeguards for both internal policies as well as external deals with third countries. (Amnesty International, 2014) The report goes on to mention the border controls and how these (violent) pushbacks are deadly and as outlined earlier are making more casualties along the border.

Europe and the European parliament must look itself in the eyes and can only but conclude that the current approach is indeed a fundamental departure from the core values it strives to abide by.

## Concluding remarks

In this essay I have talked about some of consequences the bordering and othering policies. I outlined how Europe is responsible for the deadliest border on the planet where tens of thousands of casualties are being recorded as we speak. And how this is hurting the EU through the autoimmunity lens as described by Jacques Derrida and adapted by (Houtum, 2020). I have shown these policies to have implications on relations with third countries and how the EU opens itself up to be blackmailed by these countries. Again, a form of autoimmunity. And at the end this essay assessed the six core values Europe has outlined and how the migration policies are a fundamental departure from these values. And as a result, again, is hurting itself by not abiding by them.

For migration Europe must face this topic in a more practical sense. The future is uncertain, but some scenarios talk about a substantial increase of migrants trying to find ways to reach Europe. Factors such as climate change and the population growth in Africa play an important role in this. (Dettmer, 2021) Making deals such as the Turkey deal is not the solution as (Liempt, et al., 2017) outlines. Nor is the current border regime with its paper, iron, and camp borders resulting in thousands of casualties. One can only conclude that the European Union **must** be more open for migration. Migration is and has always been a fact of life and Europe must find ways in which it can handle and deal with migrants according to the core values it set up and must stop its policies which are paradoxical and plainly

inhumane. The first important thing to change is to allow and enable safe passageways to EUrope. Break down the height of the current walls. This way smuggling and blackmailing won't be as relevant anymore since migrants don't need these services anymore. Other changes are not hard to make and can be very tangible. For example, the EU could strive to provide better accommodation and treat the humans as humans. This in accordance with its own values. EUrope should also strive to increasing the speed of the procedures which will result in lower permanent occupation and results in more housing being available. Though at the end the real question is whether EUrope can look itself in the mirror and conclude that these consequences and the continual hurting of its own values, economy and political power are worth fighting for. I argue not. I argue that we should instead save these capitals and spend them on facing the real issue of our time: climate change.

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