Migrants and Mercenaries

The Market of Fear

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The tragedy of Lampedusa has shed a harsh light on the effects of border control, which Europe is outsourcing and privatising in order to make responsibilities more opaque and sustain a market of fear. Claire Rodier reveals the ideological and economic implications of this process, and its perverse effects.

Reviewed: Claire Rodier, *Xénophobie business. À quoi servent les contrôles migratoires ?*, Éditions La Découverte, Paris, 2012, 200 p., €16.

Going beyond sociological research into the field of border space[1], Claire Rodier, a legal expert working for the GISTI ("Groupe d'Information et de Soutien aux Immigrés" – "Information and Support Group for Immigrants") and co-founder of the Euro-African network Migreurop, reveals the tacit links between economics, geopolitics, ideology and migration control. This latter practice is analysed in the light of globalisation, at a time when international mobility is stronger than ever; this is a disturbing paradox, observes the author, since modern telecommunications technologies have completely destroyed the effect of distance and led to the disappearance of some of the attributes of borders. The author carries out a scientific study of this migration control, despite being personally involved in this issue as an activist through her work for the GISTI. The argument of the book goes beyond mere condemnation, seeking instead to describe the mechanisms and stakes that are behind border controls. Migration control is rising sharply, while the number of migrants in the world has tripled since the 1960s. The barriers that they are faced with are at once of a regulatory (visas), physical (walls) and virtual (radars, movement sensors) nature. C. Rodier explains these control devices as follows: "it is as though, instead of providing us with the safety they are promising, each new control device put into place only had the function of revealing the flaws and gaps in the preceding ones, and the purpose of justifying any subsequent ones" (p. 11). In methodological terms, getting access to reliable figures is a complex task due to the ideological weight of migration issues. The census of deaths drawn up by NGOs is, to this day, the only available source that enables us to get the measure of a phenomenon that is growing just as controls are getting harsher. The author calls for more data to be collected in relation to the economic repercussions of shutting down borders.

Security: Slicing Up the Cake

Companies working in the fields of private security, of the outsourcing of services and

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[1] See in particular the work of: Giddens Anthony, *Die Konstitution der Gesellschaft. Grundzüge einer Theorie der Strukturierung*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 1984; Sassen Saskia, *The Global City: New York, London*, Tokyo, Princeton University Press, 1991; Castells Manuel, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Malden, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, 1996; Philippe Hamman, *Sociologie des espaces-frontières. Les relations transfrontalières autour des frontières françaises de l'Est*, Strasbourg, PU Strasbourg, 2013.

of immigration management are taking on an increasingly important role. Several factors are involved in this process: in many industrialised countries, cuts to defence budgets and to staff numbers have led to assignments that used to be carried out by the army being transferred to the private sector, thus creating new markets. One of the advantages of privatising security assignments for the States involved is that this promotes opacity and a dilution of responsibilities in case of any accident that may occur during an intervention, thus making it more difficult to hold responsible the institutions who originally commissioned the assignment. In a way, these para-private companies are acting as mercenaries (Bigo, 2003). In fact, the race for profitability, in which the ends justify the means, leads to risk-taking and incidents that can go as far as the death of the migrant.

Border monitoring has become a genuine *cake that everyone wants a slice of*. The European border security market has been nourished by the redefinition of borders that has characterised the start of the 21st century: this redefinition is geographic (progressive expansion of the EU), political (outsourcing of migrant control) and technological (development of virtual borders). Ever-increasingly sophisticated technology has a price, especially since the use of highly advanced technology is in itself a factor that contributes to the fast obsolescence of the equipment used, and therefore to the need to upgrade or replace it. Despite borders being equipped with technology that is ever more sophisticated and more invasive, recent history has shown that the "barriers that are set up in various places mainly have the effect of shifting and multiplying the routes and crossings used by migrants. But might that not be one of their aims? When playing cat and mouse, it isn't necessarily in the cat's interest to kill its prey." (p. 45).

The drone industry is a characteristic example of this process of transferring military technology towards civilian uses, allowing arms manufacturers to profit from research funding in this field to develop their capacities. The complexity of the set-ups that lead to private and public research institutions collaborating with advanced industrial players in the sector, and the proximity between the outlets for the products and systems they develop, promote porosity between civilian and military applications. This allows arms manufacturers to kill two birds with one stone: the fight against clandestine immigration at once creates a new sector for security technologies, and supports the development of the military arms industry.

Rematerialising the Border and Identifying an Enemy
The prison industry forms a strategic crossroads where private interests and the public players that are likely to defend them meet. The closing down of borders thus constitutes one of the corner stones of the logic of control. The private interests of the managers of detention centres increase the longer immigrants are detained for. But the security industry is not the only one that makes a profit out of migration controls, the economic benefits of which are not in themselves enough to explain the way they have developed. Leaving aside their effectiveness, the impact desired by the governments implementing them also has an ideological nature. Initially, culprits must be identified, after which any measures taken must be justified. For example, the wall at Ceuta and Melilla has a symbolic dimension in that it was built right at the same time as, on the other side of the Mediterranean, the Schengen Agreement was coming into force, thus abolishing controls within the European Union (EU) while intensifying controls at its external borders; this was a kind of materialisation of the difference between the inside and the outside, a dialogism that has been explored by anthropologists (C. Lévi-Strauss, 1968; G. Balandier 1971). This is indeed one of the functions of these migration walls: these "asymmetrical membranes", as Hedetoft puts it

(2009), become symbols of the North/South divide. In a sense, these walls simply have the function of making apparent the border between two countries.

Since Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, the conditions under which their citizens can be deported have become very restricted. Nevertheless, France continues to announce mass deportations; but these announcements are merely intended to create a media buzz, since in reality the deportations are bogus. Aid for humanitarian repatriation has allowed the French State to artificially inflate the figures regarding the number of foreigners that are sent away from French soil. And this is not the only sleight of hand involved: humanitarian repatriations do not in principle prevent the people who are sent home to come back if they are EU citizens, which contributes to artificially inflating the number of deportations.

The IOM upholds the primacy of State protection over family reunification and the right to being protected against persecutions. Rather than calling into question their relationship to the rest of the world, the ruling class has preferred to provide its population, which was traumatised by the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, with a solution that is simple, and more profitable in electoral terms: getting it to believe that it will be protected by locking the doors. When this operation allows them to direct suspicion at identifiable groups – in this case, Muslim people – this is, in a way, killing two birds with one stone. And "if on top of that it conveniently legitimises the orientations of a political perspective that is struggling to gain hold, that is the cherry on the cake" (p. 102). The author refers to a potentially explosive simplification: "The fact of connecting terrorism to immigration, especially when the shadow of Islamism comes and slips between the two, helps to legitimise far more than border control. It also translates the binary representation of Western society as the upholder of universal values, threatened by foreign terrorists who are the enemies of democracy and freedom" (p. 104). This image, which locates good, freedom and normality on one side only of the border, excludes the hypothesis that those who are identified as aggressors might actually be defending the freedom or values of other people who experience this power play as oppressive.

"Little Deals Among Neighbours"

They are common currency: "One side of the coin is that the European Union is trying to ensure the security and stability of the geographic zone of which it wants to be the centre, by establishing privileged partnerships with its neighbours, in particular the sharing of common values. The other side of it is that this sharing of values has a price" (p. 107). Europe wishes to establish its superiority: by forcing its allies to play the role of border guards for its benefit, it maintains the power it inherited from the colonial period over the definition of borders. On the other side of the table, the rulers of the countries whose help is called upon usually know how to benefit from Europe's expectations of them. The inclusion of a "migration clause" as a condition for the support provided by the Union to the countries that surround it dates back to 2004. This was when the "Neighbourhood Policy" was launched, a process that was aimed, at the time the EU was being expanded, at establishing a privileged relationship with its new neighbours on the basis of a "reciprocal commitment to common values".

The countries of the Maghreb and Europe have interests in common: this visibly unequal power balance is not in itself enough to explain why Maghreb countries are so keen to adapt their schedules and priorities to European expectations. Regional strategic issues provide them with levers for negotiation. The success of these negotiations depends on the

levers, or "carrots", which the Commission has to hand, meaning sufficiently powerful incentives to obtain a country's cooperation.

A Short-Sighted Strategy

Economic, ideological and diplomatic aspects most often combine to turn migration controls into the tools of a complex system behind which the supposed aims of their implementation tend to fall into the background. Here are two emblematic tools: the creation by the European Union of the Frontex agency, and the proliferation, on a global scale, of detention centres for illegal migrants. The former is about to serve as a European launch base for the civilian use of drones, war weapons that have been recycled for border monitoring. The latter have a key part to play in the process of the externalisation, by rich countries, of the dirty work connected to the requirements of their policies aimed at pushing out *undesirable* people. Frontex is thus tracing the cordon sanitaire with which the EU is attempting to surround itself to protect its borders. While the operations it conducts, which lock down the passing points taken by migrants, produce immediate effects, their long-term effectiveness is not proven. The real question is why people are arriving in such great numbers; but this is an issue that is visibly dismissed by the public powers. And yet the barriers that are placed across the road of those who are pushed out of their homes by necessity or the fear of persecution rarely interrupt their journey. They simply force them to find other routes, which are usually longer and more dangerous. Far from stemming the flows, these types of barriers have in reality merely shifted them elsewhere.

The Double Function of Closing Down Borders

Extensive durations of detention, or even unlimited detention, increasing numbers of holding centres, asylum seekers who are deprived of their freedom: these are the most notable trends in the treatment of foreigners by migration policies. Camps of foreigners are a message directed at the public opinion in "host" countries, which have been fed an ideology of fear, and who are reassured by being given the impression, through the locking up of people who have been identified as enemies, that things are under control. The warning also has a part to play among the numerous factors that determine the routes of the migrants. The increasing numbers of holding centres for foreigners in neighbouring lands that are cooperating with the EU's immigration policy show that it is gaining ground. The subcontracting of detention, which avoids EU member States having to manage illegal immigrants, has two advantages: on the one hand it pushes out of sight the poor treatment of which these people are often the victims in countries whose standards are not as stringent as in Europe, since such detention is released from the obligations imposed by European laws; and on the other, it plays a part in the relationship of dependence that the EU maintains with its close neighbours, by feeding into various bargaining processes.

Violence, rape, extortion, sequestration, hunger and thirst, illness, sexual exploitation and forced labour are part of the daily lives of all women and men who, having been pushed into exile, are forced to circumvent legal routes due to the increasing numbers of controls. Starting from this observation, this book provides an overview of the numerous geopolitical, economic and social issues that are raised by border controls. The politics of spectacle plays a crucial role in the issue of migration. Confusing the different faces of the enemy is one of the tools used by governmental discourse. The recurrence of a political discourse that associates immigrants, whether closely or distantly, with the dangerous classes that threaten society, combined with the injustice and discrimination that they experience on a daily basis, is a factor of exasperation and revolt, and it should come as no surprise if it leads some to perform extreme actions. Fantasies die hard, especially when they are good for business.

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