STUDY GUIDE

Special Committee on Globalization

AGENDA ITEM

The Question of Erecting Barriers on International Borders

CHAIRING PANEL

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Welcome

Forum: Special Committee on Globalization

Topic: The Question of Erecting Barriers on International Borders

Chair: Yohann Mutta

Co-Chair: Souhaila Abourchid

Dear Delegates,

First of all we would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you. We hope that you are as much as we are looking forward to fruitful debate on one of the most pertinent topics of our time as. The issue of walls is one that seems quite trivial, but in reality there is much more than what meets the eye as they have impacts on numerous aspects of life for millions of people across the world. Many of us here are beneficiaries of globalization, and have taken its benefits for granted and at the same time not considered that there are people around the world for whom globalization simply doesn't work. As globalization begins to take an even more prominent role in discussions about international relations, we saw it fitting to include a special committee on globalization, and more so discussing the issue of construction of physical barriers that are on the increase today. The countries you represent in this special committee are countries that are in some way or another very much connected to this issue, we have purposely chosen these countries to provide the largest diversity of opinions, with a variety of circumstances so as to make debate as engaging as possible. Following this is a detailed study guide that gives some background information for the topic that we will be discussing. However, we encourage you to research material outside of this study guide as it is by no means an exhaustive document on all thing concerning border barriers. In the appendices, you will find more resources on the topic of this committee that you may find useful. We wish you happy preparation, and we look forward to meeting you all in March!

Sincerely,
Yohan Mutta and Souhaila Abourchid

Introduction

The number of walls worldwide remained stagnant after the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9th 1989 until the turn of the century. However, wall construction projects increased dramatically after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. By 2011, more than 45 walls separated countries and territories. In today's globalized world, do countries have the right to continue putting up physical barriers on international borders? Should such a practice continue, as the world is seeking to put down barriers that have for so long hindered development, and have contributed to fostering animosity, and conflict between groups, especially since borders themselves like these walls are human creations? In a world where we are becoming more and more connected, it is becoming easier and easier to scapegoat specific groups of people for a nation's woes, and try to "solve" the problem by keeping them out. Needless to say in the past few months the phrase "Let's build a wall" has occupied an even more central role in the global political narrative.

Definition of Key Terms

Globalization: is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical wellbeing in societies around the world.

International Border: Geographic boundaries of sovereign states

Border Barrier: Is a physical separation usually in the form of a fence or other obstacle that prevents movement or access across an international border. Such barriers are typically constructed for border control purposes, such as to curb illegal immigration, human trafficking, and smuggling.

Border Controls: Border controls are measures taken by a country to monitor or regulate its borders. Border controls are put in place to control the movement of people, animals and goods into as well as out of a country

Demarcation: the action of fixing the boundary or limits of something.

Cease-fire agreement: A temporary stoppage of a war in which each side agrees with the other to suspend aggressive actions.

Immigration: the action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country

Sealed Border: A border completely blocked by a border barrier

Asylum-seeker: A person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another

Buffer zones: A neutral area serving to separate hostile forces or nations

Schengen Area: an area comprising 26 European states that have officially abolished passport and any other type of border control at their mutual borders

Sovereignty: The authority of a state to govern itself or another state, also known as the right to rule

Open border: A border that enables free movement of people between different jurisdictions with limited or no restrictions on movement

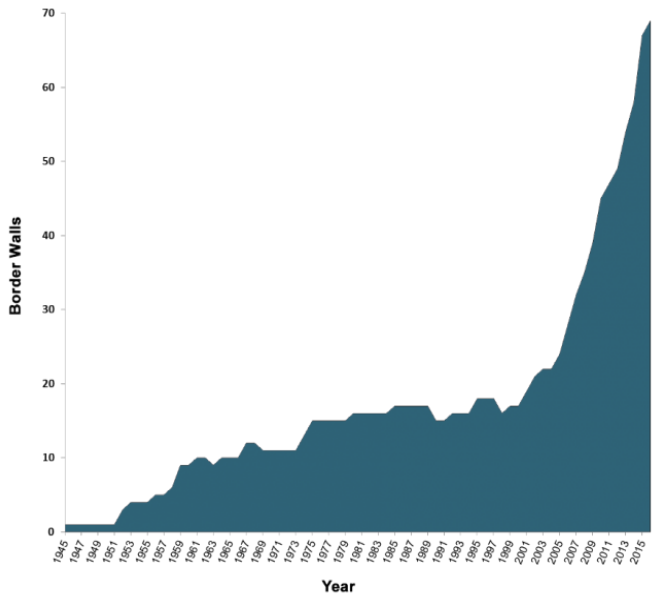
General Overview

What is the issue?

In the recently concluded US Presidential election of 2016, President Donald Trump's proposal to build a wall on the U.S. Mexico border took prominence as one of the major talking points of the election, and of international politics. He argued that it would keep unwanted people from the United States. However President Trump is not alone in believing in viewing that a physical barriers is a way to secure a given region. In reality border barriers have composed an integral part of both inter and intra national relations all through human history -The Great Wall of China comes to mind as an example.

The walls between North and South Korea survive to this day since the cold war, which was said to have ended with the fall of yet another wall, the Berlin Wall. Since then the world has moved to become more integrated and more united, yet walls continue to divide populations around the world, and since the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, and the refugee crisis of the 2010s, walls have seen an increase in popularity across the world. In fact half of all border barriers built after World War 2, were built between 2000 and 2014.

It was only until around 2015 when border walls really found their way on news cycles around the globe. Countries as diverse as those represented in this committee as well as Bulgaria, Estonia, and Tunisia announced or begun work on new border barriers. This trend continued through to 2016 and now into 2017. This coming at a time of the refugee crisis,and an increase in the number of deaths of would be asylum seekers and migrants trying to search for a better life mostly in Europe, in 2015 this number was 5,604 people.



This surge of new border walls is a trend of recent times, which has come about in response to a growth in uncontrolled international immigration. It is very easy to say that there was an era in which most borders were demarcated with physical barriers, as imagining ancient cities and empires, many of them did have walls. However, the construction of border barriers for the reasons we have today are a fairly new phenomenon. At the end of World War 2, there were less than 5 physical barriers, in 1989 there were 15, today there are close to 70.

This rush to build walls raises numerous questions which this committee hopes will look into. Such as, Why now? Did these walls work in the past? Do they work today? Should they be put up today? Do nations have the right to do whatever they please on their borders? Do these infringe upon human rights? Or are walls simply a sign of a change in the world order, maybe even a move away from integration?

Origin and History of the Issue

For many, the Great Wall of China is reason enough to believe that humans have built border walls since time immemorial, and that they have proven to be a useful means of protecting populations from foreign threats. However the Great Wall is much less great than we are made to believe.

Various Chinese feudal states built walls over a period of several hundred years to prevent raids from the Mongols. The oldest walls have been dated to as far back as 220BCE, but evidence for their existence is fairly weak from a historical perspective. Because in those days walls were built of mud, they were not effective and they eroded quickly. In a few places in China archaeologists have found faint lines in the landscape but little evidence aside from this remains.

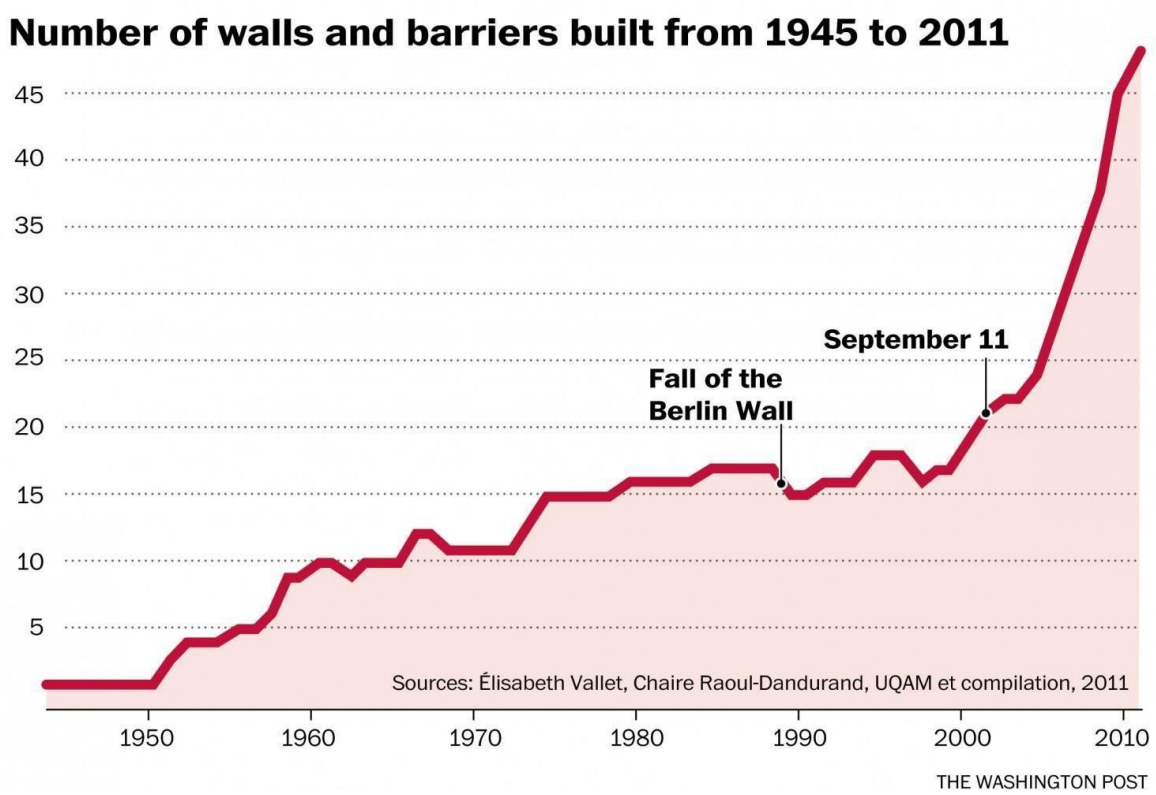
The stone walls built in mountains near Beijing were built in the late 16th century during the Ming Dynasty. These walls were not effective and were overrun in a few decades. During the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, peasants in China dismantled the walls and used the stones for "more productive purposes." The remaining sections were ignored until discovered by Western travelers who looked at them in awe, and created the term "Great Wall." It was only in the past few decades that the "Great Wall" myth grew, and since then sections have been rebuilt to be tourist attractions.

These walls which were built by Chinese emperors are remarkable because they are exceptions to the historical trend of the time. Firstly, ancient countries did not have fixed territorial borders, this was because accurate maps and not been invented, and the idea of mutually recognized countries had not yet come to fruition. Instead, empires and cities had areas on the frontier where power diminished in relation to the distance from the seat of power (usually the capital city, palace, etc.). Secondly, in that time rulers did not have the labor and technology to build and guard such a long wall. Yes, they were a common technology of defense but only existed on a smaller scale around a densely inhabited city. While long walls did exist, such as Hadrian's Wall in England. They served the same purpose as those in China, to mark an area of defense, and provided infrastructure to prevent raiders and increasing tax collection.

In the 2000s, after 9/11 the number of walls built almost doubled. The world became a world of walls, this came in response to the uncertainty in the world after the end of the Cold War order, the new war on terror, and increased global migration due to conflict, persecution, poverty, and hunger. Fences started to be erected to keep refugees out of Europe, keep North Koreans in North Korea, and to secure territorial gains. One main strategy dominated geopolitics, whenever two groups are in conflict, separate them by building a wall.

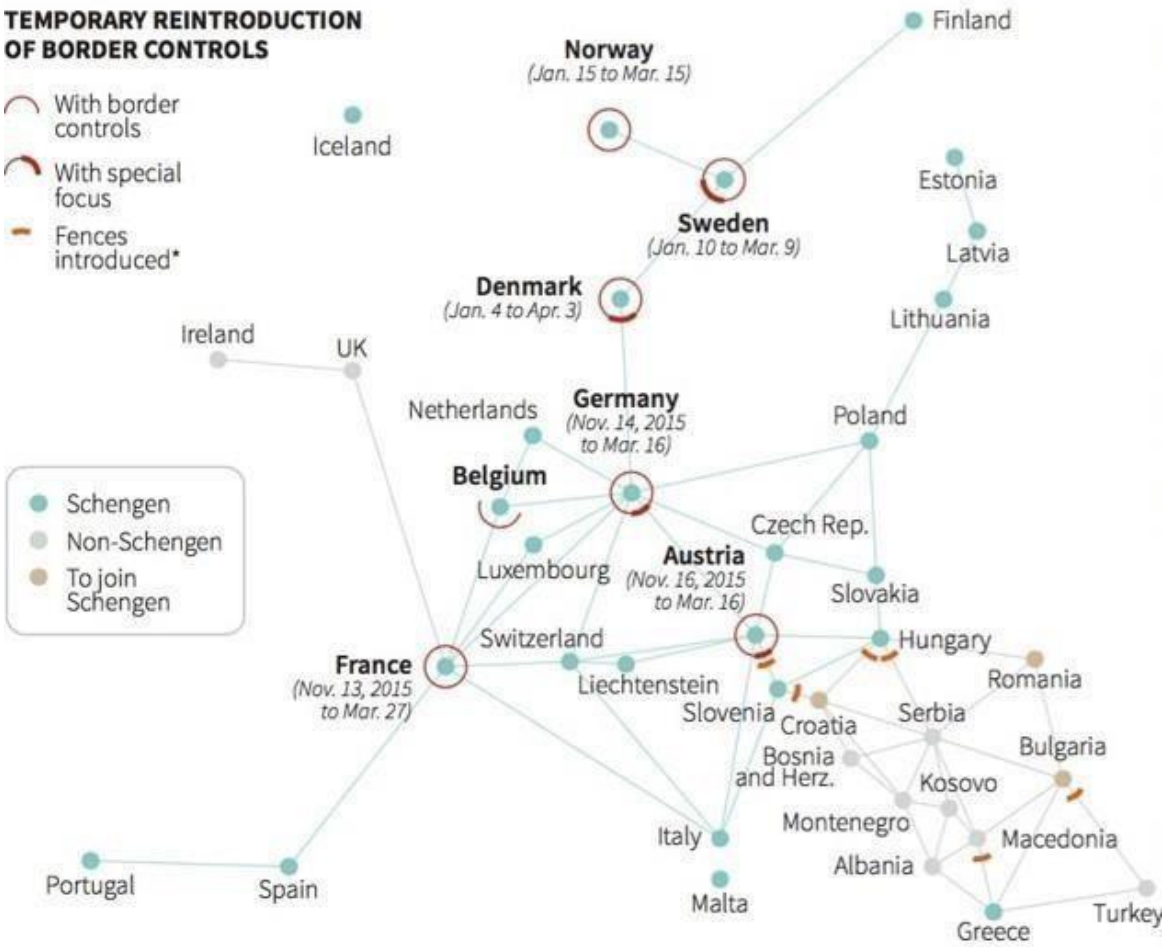
Current Situation

"Border walls and fences are currently going up around the world at the fastest rate since the Cold War"- The Atlantic



Today, the purpose of borders has changed, hence a dramatic increase in the construction of border barriers. Today, countries control areas of land with fixed borders that most other countries recognize and respect hence the use of walls to mark territorial control obsolete. Today most countries are members of the United Nations, and are signatory to the UN charter and because of that agree to respect the borders and territorial sovereignty of all other members. And by the 1960s most nations had stable borders, and in general did not expect an invasion by any neighboring country, needless to say there have been numerous exceptions to this trend, but that is a topic for another day.

The refugee crisis, that has seen European governments plan and construct walls and fences across Europe. In September 2015, Hungary completed a fence along its border with Serbia, one of the primary entry points for refugees trying to enter the European Union A mere several hours after its completion over 50 people were apprehended for trying to scale the fence. The fence built by Hungary is only one of a series of anti-immigrant fences along the southern border of Europe's Schengen zone. In Scandinavia, in December of 2015 platforms at Copenhagen's main train station were fenced off as part of Sweden's aims to control the number of immigrants entering the city of Malmo from Denmark. Barriers in Europe however, have also existed before the refugee crisis. Refugees have been trying to get around the fences originally built in the 1990s which enclaves Spain's enclaves of Veuty and Melilla in morocco. Greece and Bulgaria also erected fences on their borders with Turkey in 2012, and Ukraine started to seal its border with Russia in 2014. In 2014, Baltic states stated they would do the same, and as a result Belarus would be the only country without a sealed border between the Baltic and Black Sea.



The vast majority of justifications for these border barriers are security concerns, and the prevention of illegal migration. In addition, most decisions to construct border barriers were made after 2001, and 15 were made in 2014 alone. In the Middle East, wars in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and the mass immigration of refugees as a result of the conflict have spurred countries to seal their borders. Israel will soon surround itself entirely after completing its wall with Jordan. In Asia as well walls and fences are not amiss, the use of these are mainly to prevent illegal immigration and trade rather than for security, or to seal disputed borders. However, the line of control between India and Pakistan in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, is still a prime example of highly militarized border barriers. In Africa, Kenya has began work on a border barrier with its border with Somalia, with the justification being to defend the country from terrorist groups that use the porous border to come to Kenya and carry out attacks.

Some border barriers, or proposals of are much less realistic than others. 3 years ago, Brazil announced the construction of a "virtual" wall, monitored by satellite, drones, and other UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), along its 15,000km long border, one of the longest in the entire world. In 2015, Brazil began work on the sections prone to smuggling with Paraguay and Bolivia. Critics have been quick to say that this border runs through thick and impassable rainforest which is close to impossible to fully monitor. Even with less harsh terrain, border security that employs the use of advanced technology sometimes fails. The USA which has quite often reinforced its border with Mexico, and Saudi Arabia which has started to monitor 5 of its borders have struggled significantly with proposals that were exorbitantly expensive, or simply didn't work. Sometimes even both. In reality, many of these border barriers are reminiscent of trench warfare and the cold war, barbed-wire, electric fences, coupled with ditches and buffer zones.

However, walls do not totally lack value and purpose. For example, barriers built to stop the current influx of refugees into Europe could be a temporary way to provide relief to authorities in the host country. Or, building walls to put in place a cease-fire zone which would separate conflicting factions in Syria could reduce conflict between fighting factions for enough time to allow peace to be negotiated. Border barriers can be temporary fixes when more permanent solutions do not work.

In some cases, barriers make situations worse, when walls are built and permanent solutions delayed its builders take the risk that these temporary solutions will make the problem it was meant to get rid of worse. As what happens when a barrier becomes a long-lasting feature of geopolitics it often becomes a rallying point for unresolved tensions, becoming an object that continues to irritate and create more problems than before it existed.

Major Parties Involved

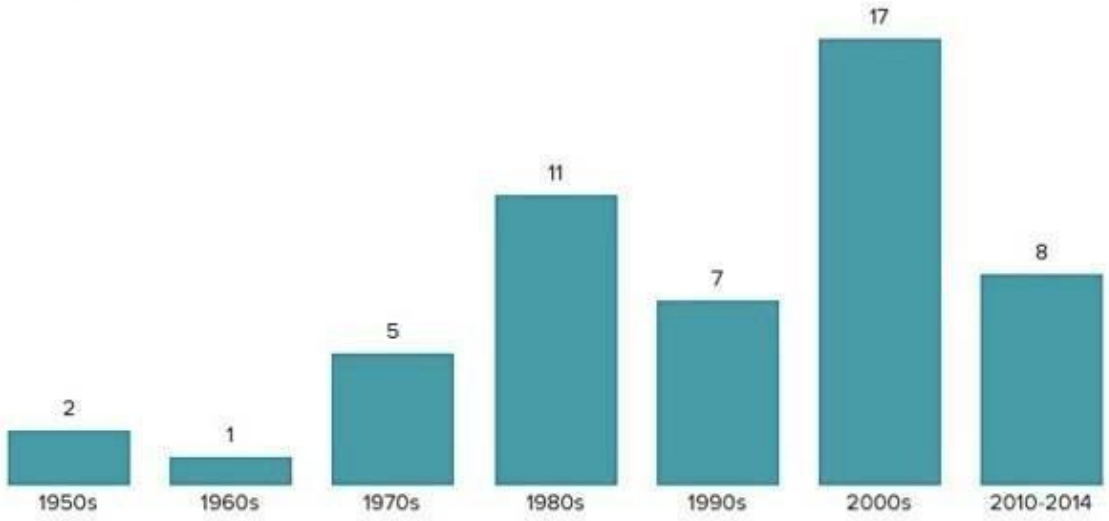
European Union: The EU is the union of European states that works towards forging greater European integration. It's position has been in a precarious one since the onset of the refugee crisis, but its stance is for member states to pull together and provide shelter for people fleeing persecution. But in truth, most members have failed to take their quotas of refugees and close to 13 have built border barriers. The EU however cannot do anything, as its political influence is dependent on the political will of members states who are not too keen on opening up their borders.

United Nations: One of the aims of the UN is to foster international cooperation. Border barriers are in total contravention with this aim, and the UN stands against them. However, the UN cannot act in any manner as it cannot interfere in the internal politics of a country.

NATO: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a military alliance of countries in Europe and in North America. It stands for the defense of all member states within it, and if that involves the construction of border walls to accomplish this aim, then NATO will wholeheartedly support it.

UNHCR: United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees is against the construction of border barriers as it prevents people fleeing persecution from finding peace, and end up remaining in overcrowded camps with little resources, and dire living conditions. All against basic human rights.

Number of Separation Barriers Initiated Around the World (1945– 2014)



Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Little has been done in general by the international community to prevent the building of border barriers, simply because it is a relatively new phenomenon around the world. Aside from simple disapproval by International organizations, and disapproval by countries which would be "victims" of a border barrier, little has been done to stop the prevention of building these barriers. Needless to say, in the coming years far more attention, and therefore action will take place with regards to border barriers. This is simply because countries can do whatever they please on their borders as it is their own territory. which they have total sovereignty over.

Possible Solutions

Sanctions against nations that put up border barriers are one way to ensure that walls are not built. However, sanctions have far reaching negative impacts on populations that can sometimes lead to an infringement on human rights. Another would be for countries to try and solve the issues which are causing the building of these border barriers in other ways. Many border barriers simply give the illusion that the border is protected when in reality if someone really wanted to cause harm to a country a border barrier would simply be an obstacle they would have to overcome, rather than total prevention. However, any solutions proposed would have to be reasonable enough to be accepted, but also effective enough to once and for all address the problem with border barriers.

Appendix

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