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Humanitarianism, Human Rights, and Security in EUropean Border Governance: The Case of Frontex

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where it states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank Christina Boswell and Andrew Neal, who accompanied me throughout the process of writing this thesis, were consistent and reliable, sharp-eyed readers of the various drafts that eventually transformed into this thesis, and generously provided advice and encouragement whenever I asked for it.

I would also like to thank the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh for awarding me the very first Chrystal Macmillan Studentship. I feel honoured to have been selected for a studentship celebrating Chrystal Macmillan's pioneering work for social justice and gender equality. Without the financial support entailed by the studentship, this doctoral project would not have been possible.

Throughout my four years at Edinburgh University, I have had wonderful companions who made me laugh, kept me sane, and brightened up my working days with coffee and lunch breaks, walks around town, or weekends full of hiking and adventures in the Scottish Highlands. My heartfelt thanks go to the friends, colleagues, and office mates who made Edinburgh what it was: Jo, Alessio, Anna, Roberto, Lisa, Henrike, Supurna, Aoife, Mike, Kathy, Hsinyen, Alvaro and Carolina, Oli, Barbara, Carmen and Marieke.

Beyond Edinburgh, I have found a stimulating academic community in various networks, at conferences, workshops, and the EIRSS summer school "Security, Borders, and Mobility." Speaking to Didier Bigo, Julien Jeandesboz, Polly Pallister-Wilkins, Francesco Ragazzi, Thierry Balzacq, and Emmanuel-Pierre Guittet about their work in the security field has enriched my understandings and analysis. The many conversations I have had with peers who share not only my research interests, but also my anger about European border governance and my desire to contest the division between 'activism' and 'academia' to work towards political change have been incredibly rewarding, inspiring, and challenging. Many thanks to Maurice, Stephan, Veit, Damien, Leonie, Lorenzo, Martina, Celine, and all the kritnet and MobLab people, whose importance for the thought processes behind this doctoral thesis cannot be overstated.

Next to long hikes with friends in the Highlands, what kept me going throughout my doctoral work was the world of dancing, which I gradually discovered as I progressed with the PhD. The Blues community in Edinburgh and across the UK offered a space where I could completely empty my head, freeing it from circular thoughts. Thank you all for the many weekends together, the dances, and the late-night brownies.

As my funding drew to a close last autumn, I was fortunate in being offered a job at Warwick University, which allowed me not only to continue paying my bills, but also to become part of a vibrant team of academics who share my interest in European border governance and migration. Vicki Squire, Nick Vaughan-Williams, and Dallal Stevens have provided me with this great opportunity, and have generously offered their guidance and understanding for my ongoing battle to finish the PhD, as well as nudging me to think about life beyond submission.

Beginning work at Warwick meant that I had to relocate to Coventry during the last year of this PhD. What initially seemed like a major challenge has turned out to be a stroke of luck: in the Coventry Peace House, I have found not only a lived commitment to social justice, but also boundless understanding for my double workload during this past year. Thanks to Alex F, Alex H, Beth, Dasi, Micki, and Veit for allowing me to become part of your community, and offering support and friendship throughout this manic year. Special thanks go to Alex H and Stu for proofreading parts of this thesis, to Julia for adding her boundless energy and attentiveness to the house on every visit, and to Veit for our work sessions in the kitchen, the constant supply of coffee, and his support in helping me think through conceptual deadlocks.

There have been many people who have been by my side for much longer than this PhD project, and who have kept me grounded, loved, and supported throughout it. I owe many an email, Skype talk, and visit to them, and admire the patience and understanding they had when I disappeared into mountains of work without warning. Thanks for our conversations, laughter and tears, marathon Skype sessions, emails, packages and postcards, your many visits, and your determination to remain connected to me despite the physical distance and my tendency to hide from the world when

things got stressful. You have been a never-ending source of support, love, comfort, joy, and self-reflection. Linda, Mo, Geraldine and her wonderful family, Marianne, Maren, Charlotte, Sophie, Franzi, Henni, Sarah, Christian, Paul: I thank you with all my heart.

Jacopo has been on my side for much of this project, and has had to endure most of my stress, anxiety, and occasional grumpiness as I was writing up. Your boundless patience, love, and support, your understanding of my working routines and never-ending practical help have allowed me to stay focused. I don't know how I would have kept going this past year without your open ears, arms, and heart, and your well-timed reminders to take breaks and enjoy them, every now and then. I cannot thank you enough.

My family has been my rock throughout. I am in awe of my parents' ability to give us unlimited love, while at the same time challenging us to question and to critically reflect on our choices. The knowledge to have a place to return to at any time, under any circumstances, has been invaluable. I am incredibly privileged to be able to count on my family's unwavering support, laughter and silliness, encouragement, and open arms. I cannot imagine life – let alone writing this thesis – without them.

Abstract

This thesis explores the (re-)positioning of the EU border agency Frontex within a wider shift towards humanitarianism and human rights in EUropean¹ border governance. By examining Frontex’s public self-representation through time, it shows that the agency has gradually appropriated humanitarianism and human rights, while at the same time continuing to rely on a conceptualisation of migration as a security issue. The thesis traces this development, outlining how the agency has increasingly mobilised all three discursive formations in its public narratives about itself, border controls, and unauthorised migration to EUrope. Seeking to move beyond analysing Frontex through its public documents and statements only, the thesis complements this analysis with insights gained through interviews and informal conversations with Frontex staff and guest officers, as well as participant observations at Frontex events and in joint operations between May 2013 and September 2014. Exploring the perceptions of those working for and with Frontex, it complicates common portrayals of Frontex as a unitary, rational actor in EUropean border governance. Instead, it argues that Frontex is better understood as a highly fragmented organisation situated in an ambiguous environment and faced with inconsistent and contradictory demands.

Situated at the intersection of critical security studies and critical migration and border studies, this thesis seeks to make three contributions to these literatures: first, it argues that critical security studies would benefit from a cross-fertilisation with insights gained in new institutionalism, which add organisational dynamics as an additional layer of analysis to developments in broader security fields. Second, it provides insights into the relationships between the discursive formations of security, humanitarianism, and human rights in contemporary border governance. The thesis argues that the three formations, at times seen as opposed to one another, share a number of important commonalities that create the conditions of possibility for the appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights by security actors such as Frontex,

¹ This thesis uses the term “EUrope” to problematize the coterminous use of “EU” and “Europe”, challenging the notion that each is equivalent to the other (see Bialasiewicz 2011; Vaughan-Williams 2015b).

and for the emergence of new coalitions of actors in the EUropean border regime; as security, humanitarian, and human rights actors share the goal of rendering EUropean border controls less (visibly) violent. Third, the thesis provides rare empirical insights into the security actor Frontex, which has remained relatively opaque and elusive despite attracting much interest within academic and activist communities alike.

Introduction

It is late May, 2013. In Warsaw's Pepsi Arena football stadium, around 700 people have gathered for the annual European Day for Border Guards. Many have met each other before and are chatting in small groups. Those who mix and mingle are border guards from various member states, representatives of the security industry, Frontex staff members, or guests from third states, specifically invited for this special day. Among them are also chosen delegates from NGOs, international organisations, and EU agencies, as well as a few researchers, including myself. When entering the event area, a large exhibition hall opens up and invites participants to learn about recent developments at EUropean external borders. Security companies showcase their latest inventions. On large banners, they feature military-style images, inviting onlookers to "*See through the confusion. Minimize the threat.*" From scanners able to detect false passports to radio wave barriers alerting against intruders, what they advertise is clear: protection from the 'migrant threat' by means of newer, better, more sophisticated technology. A brief stroll further, a different scenario unfolds. Amnesty International, ECRE, PICUM and various other rights-based organisations present their perspective on EUropean border management. Videos and leaflets cite the numbers of deaths in the Mediterranean: attempts to show the human side of border controls. Right next to them, yet separated by a movable, orange wall, various national police and military forces each have their own stall, presenting their work as border guards. In the middle, in between border guards and NGOs on the one hand, and security companies on the other, Frontex has set up its exhibition space.

At the centre of the exhibition, Frontex is also the organiser of this event: its diverse participants have come by invitation of the agency. In panel discussions during the day, representatives of Frontex, academia, national border guard and police forces, NGOs, EU institutions, and think tanks speak about EUropean border controls with one another, highlighting challenges, best practices, and future developments. Sitting in the audience, I cannot help but wonder how this has happened, how Frontex – an agency that is barely 7 years old at this moment in time, and that has been subject to

intense criticism by NGOs and activists since its very beginnings – has seemingly become a connection point for national border guards, security companies, NGOs, international organisations, and EU institutions.

This particular day in May marked the beginning of my fieldwork for this thesis, and illustrated what had intrigued me already from my desk in Edinburgh, and during political work with friends and allies in Berlin and Sicily: Frontex, the EUropean border management agency, seemed to be changing its public self-representation, beginning to present itself as an active promoter of fundamental rights, and as a saviour of people in distress at sea. As Frontex's mandate is the coordination of external border controls, and its focus has continued to remain on border security, this development puzzled me. More than that, it inspired my research questions for this thesis. First, I wondered, *how do humanitarianism, human rights, and security relate to each other, and to governing EUropean borders?* I had observed that Frontex's increase in humanitarian and human rights language was illustrative of a wider strengthening of humanitarianism and human rights in EUropean border governance, and wanted to reflect on this development.

Second, I was interested in exploring how the agency negotiated humanitarianism, human rights, and security in public narratives about itself, its work, and the environment it finds itself in. I was curious to see whether people working for or with the agency in various capacities would similarly rely on humanitarianism, human rights, and security in representing their work and the role and tasks of Frontex. As such, my second research question was *how does Frontex negotiate humanitarianism, human rights, and security in its self-representation, and how has this changed over time?* While I realised that I would not be able to retroactively research staff members' changing presentations of their work and Frontex's role in EUropean border controls through time,² I knew from observing Frontex as an advocate and activist that there had been changes in its public statements and documents. Tracing these changes

² Analysing changes in staff members' representations through time would have required a longitudinal study, with interviews conducted across the ten-year period analysed in this PhD, which was not feasible in the framework of this doctoral project.

through time seemed highly relevant: not only would it allow me to look at how Frontex has gradually been constructed as a partially humanitarian and human rights actor, but it would also give some indication of when this shift began. Third, thinking through the effects of Frontex's repositioning would allow for reflecting on the role of humanitarianism and human rights in contemporary EUropean border governance more widely, and on whether these discursive formations could be employed effectively to challenge a highly problematic border system, or if and how they might further reinforce this very system. In line with this concern I set out to explore the third question guiding this research project: *what are the effects of these changes in self-representation on the agency and its position in the border regime?*

The curiosity that drove this research was inspired by two rather different motivations. On the one hand, I had a scholarly interest in the relationship between humanitarianism, human rights, and security formations. I wanted to think through their connections, their tensions, similarities, and their articulation in contemporary EUropean border governance. In addition, I was eager to learn more about Frontex, too, an agency that had remained relatively elusive over the first few years of its existence. On the other hand, my research interest was inspired by my concerns regarding political activism and social justice. I had myself been involved in campaigns calling for search and rescue at sea and universal human rights, and I wondered how such work might inadvertently be connected to Frontex's repositioning as a humanitarian and human rights actor. In paying close attention to how the three discursive formations were negotiated by Frontex, I thus also hoped to be able to reflect more widely on what the connections between humanitarianism, human rights, and security might mean for activism and critique; for those who work to oppose a highly exclusionary, discriminatory, violent and often deadly border regime.

Changes in Frontex's self-representations through time

A first, explorative study of Frontex's annual reports rather clearly illustrates the changes that I was interested in. While an in-depth, qualitative analysis of Frontex's

self-representation over the last ten years will be presented in chapter 4, a quick word count through Frontex’s annual reports at the very beginning of this doctoral project confirmed my initial impression that there was some re-positioning by the agency that would be worth examining in greater depth. First, I ran a word count for “human right/s” and “fundamental right/s” in Frontex’s annual reports, in order to see whether what I had perceived as an increasing emphasis of the agency on these legal norms would be apparent in the documents. Figure 1 shows how often the terms appeared in the general reports of the agency since its foundation. As is apparent at first sight, there has been a stark increase in references to fundamental rights³ beginning from 2008 onwards, while they were not referred to at all in the agency’s earlier reports. The reasons for this and the contexts in which these references appear in the reports and other publications will be explored in depth in chapter 4. Here, suffice it to note that Frontex has increasingly mobilised a human rights terminology in presenting itself and its work to outsiders. By now, Frontex has effectively mainstreamed human rights language in its official publications and communication. In doing so, it has presented itself not only as fully respecting fundamental rights, but also as actively promoting them in its operations (see e.g. Frontex 2012a).

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
human right*	0	0	0	0	1	9	4	4	5	10
fundamental right*	0	0	0	3	5	16	22	58	65	137

Figure 1: Word counts of rights-related terms in Frontex’s annual reports over time

Seeking to find out how the agency’s language on saving lives at sea evolved over time, I decided to search the same reports specifically for “saved”, “saving”, and “save”, as well as “rescue”, “rescuing”, and “rescued”. As figure 2 shows, references to saving or rescuing individuals increased as well in recent years, although not as

³ As figure 1 shows, Frontex refers primarily to ‘fundamental rights’ rather than ‘human rights’, which is in line with wider EU discourse and the legal obligations the agency faces under the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Charter was first proclaimed and ratified in 2000, and became legally binding with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 (European Union 2000).

strongly as those concerning fundamental rights. Moreover, Frontex already referenced these terms briefly in earlier years, with them appearing in 2006 and 2007. Again, this is merely a quantitative exploration of the changes that interest me in this thesis, but it illustrates that also regarding the agency’s emphasis on saving lives, there has been a shift in recent years. Since 2011, the agency regularly highlights the number of lives saved during its operations, citing them in its annual reports as well as issuing news items on its website publicising such numbers on an ongoing basis. On its website, Frontex has described itself as “Europe’s biggest Search and Rescue (SAR) operation” for at least the last three years (Frontex 2013a). The agency also frames facilitators of unauthorised migration as risking the lives of people on the move in dangerous sea crossings, indifferent to their potential deaths (see e.g. Frontex 2010a). In this narrative, the work the agency does in seeking to detect and identify individuals attempting to reach the European Union is framed as a humanitarian effort, aimed at saving those at the mercy of smugglers and criminal groups.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
sav*	0	1	0	0	2	1	2	3	2	4
rescu*	0	0	2	0	0	3	4	6	14	18

Figure 2: Word counts of rescue-related terms in Frontex’s annual reports over time

Frontex’s key mandate, however, remains border security. What security is, and how it can be defined, is a matter of much controversy in the academic literature (see chapter 1). There is a variety of concepts that might contribute to constituting border control and migration as security issues in Frontex’s annual reports. While a more thorough evaluation of the agency’s various ways of constructing migration, people on the move, and border controls as security problems will be conducted in chapters 4 and 5, running a word count for some of the terms commonly associated with security in the realm of migrations and borders is insightful as an initial exploration of Frontex’s positioning in this regard. In the annual reports, I decided to search for “illegal”, “threat”, and “risk” – all terms commonly associated with security.

Examining the results in their context, it is noticeable that Frontex gradually stopped referring to “illegal migrants” from 2008 onwards (see figure 3). A further search for “irregular” confirms the impression that the agency started using this term instead to describe individuals from 2009 onwards, while continuing to use “illegal” and “illegally” to describe border crossings and other practices. The word count also shows that Frontex used the term “threat” less often in recent years. The word “risk” on the other hand remains crucial to Frontex’s self-description, and continues to be regularly invoked.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
illegal	2	41	81	27	14	12	28	22	18	14
_(im)migration	2	20	34	3	4	4	3	0	1 ⁴	0
_(im)migrant(s)	0	15	22	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
_ly	0	1	5	2	5	3	7	9	2	5
_border crossing	0	0	5	13	3	4	14	12	9	7
irregular	0	0	2	0	6	21	7	18	14	15
_(im)migration	0	0	2	0	1	13	7	8	14	10
_migrant(s)	0	0	0	0	5	5	0	5	0	5
threat	1	4	11	3	1	8	0	1	3 ⁵	6
risk	7	34	42	25	22	24	27	37	42	49

Figure 3: Word counts of security-related terms in Frontex’s annual reports over time

When connected with a cursory qualitative analysis, it can be observed that despite some slight changes in the vocabulary of the agency – away from the terms “illegal migrant”, “illegal immigration” and “threat” – Frontex still very much relies on the discursive formation of security when describing migratory trends or its own work to the public. As will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the agency mobilises both risk management and threat and crisis narratives. They are not only conveyed through the language used, but also through maps and images presented on the agency’s website.

⁴ The report refers to an “illegal immigration” Operation Action Plan (OAP) managed by the Council Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security (COSI) that Frontex contributed to. Interestingly, “illegal immigration” is thus used only within quotation marks.

⁵ The report uses ‘threat’ only in conjunction with ‘EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA)’.

Lastly, it should be acknowledged that Frontex’s annual reports vary in length. As figure 4 shows, however, the variation in page length does not correlate with the increases of fundamental rights and search and rescue terminology, and as such cannot explain the apparent change in Frontex’s self-representation within its annual reports over time. While the length of its general reports has increased over time, the rise in references to humanitarianism and human rights are disproportional to the growth in page length.

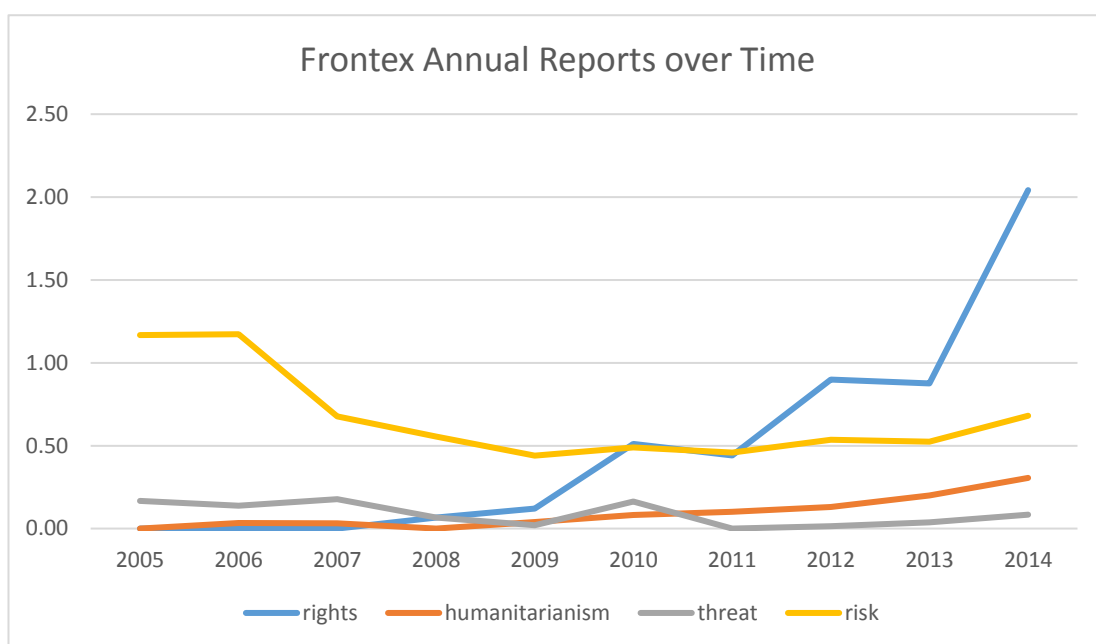


Figure 4: Word counts in Frontex’s annual reports over time, divided by page numbers

Of course, word counts of this sort are a crude method of analysis to identify all three of the discursive formations named above, and the words included in (and excluded from) this initial search are open for debate. Other terms might be relevant too, and in addition to specific words in and of themselves, the associations, connections, and images created by the agency matter in terms of understanding whether and how Frontex frames migration and border controls as a matter of security, as well as how its presentations regarding humanitarianism and human rights have changed over time. Despite these clear shortcomings, the searches above illustrate that there has been a

change in Frontex's self-representation through its annual reports over time that merits closer examination. This insight marked the very beginning of this research project. It motivated much of the more detailed analysis that was to follow, which will be presented in the remainder of this thesis.

Frontex: Not an isolated case

The coexistence of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in Frontex's self-representation is not an isolated case, but is illustrative of wider developments in the border regime. Staggering numbers of deaths at sea in recent years have contributed to growing concerns about search and rescue at sea: "irregular" boat crossings have come to be framed not only as a security concern for EU and Schengen member states, but increasingly also as a great risk for those attempting to reach EUropean shores without authorisation. At the same time, humanitarian, human rights, and security actors have entered mutually supportive, if tense relationships with one another in EUropean border governance. The ensemble of actors described in the opening paragraphs describes far more than what happened on this particular day in a Warsaw football stadium: in recent years, we have been seeing the increasing convergence of humanitarian, human rights, and security discursive formations and actors in EUropean border governance more widely.

As Nick Vaughan-Williams (2015a, 2015b) observed, the EU's current policy framework for migration and border management, the 2011 "Global Approach to Migration and Mobility" (GAMM), was partially framed in security terms, presenting unauthorised migration as a threat to good governance, the economy, the welfare system, and social cohesion. On the other hand, it also presented a concern for the well-being of "irregular migrants", emphasised their human rights, and declared a "migrant-centred" approach to migration management to be at its core: "[i]n essence, migration governance is not about 'flows', 'stocks' and 'routes', it is about people" (European Commission 2011a, 6). The document, designed as a guiding framework for EU policies and practices in relation to migration and mobility more widely,

mobilised the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security. Rather than being opposed to one another, the three formations coexisted in the GAMM, a guiding document for EU migration and border policies and practices.

When examining EU policy documents and public statements pertaining to migration governance since then, humanitarian, human rights, and security discursive formations continue to be drawn on simultaneously. The highly publicised mourning about the drowning of more than 360 individuals when their ship capsized off the coast of Lampedusa on October 3rd 2013 provides one example of this. The deaths gave rise to widespread statements of grief and calls for action, most of which invoked humanitarian concerns – above all the need to reduce deaths at sea. Condolences also came from EU leaders, and Commissioner Malmström and Commission President Barroso flew to Lampedusa in the week following the disaster. Malmström’s first reaction to the news was a tweet issued on the day of the disaster, in which she wrote: “[a]ppalled by Lampedusa tragedy. Thoughts are with victims and families. We must redouble efforts to fight smugglers exploiting human despair” (Malmström 2013a). Already in this very first reaction, she brought together humanitarian concerns with a securitising focus on smugglers who ought to be fought.

Similarly, other official responses to the Lampedusa deaths linked appeals to improve search and rescue and decrease deaths at sea with a narrative that blamed those facilitating unauthorised crossings of the Mediterranean and called for an intensified fight against smugglers (Barroso 2013a, 2013b; Malmström 2013b; Stranieriinitalia.it 2013; UNHCR 2013). Malmström soon called for the deployment of “an extensive Frontex search and rescue operation that [would] cover the Mediterranean from Cyprus to Spain” (Malmström 2013c). According to her, such an operation would prevent further losses of lives at sea by improving the possibilities to identify, track and rescue small boats. Not only in the short-term responses to the deaths, however, were humanitarian concerns articulated together with a security focus. The policy recommendations and action reports by the Commission-led “Task Force Mediterranean”, established as a direct response to the Lampedusa disaster, clearly articulated humanitarian concerns while proposing largely security-focused measures,

including closer cooperation with third states in border and migration control (European Commission 2013, 2014a).

While humanitarianism, human rights, and security formations have coexisted in statements, reports, and policy guidelines, there has also been a multiplication of humanitarian actors in EUropean borderlands in recent years. Since William Walters described this development as the “birth of the humanitarian border” in 2011, it has become even more pronounced (Walters 2011, 144). Not only are the EU and international organisations frequently relying on humanitarian language, but also, the number of humanitarian actors involved in various ways in migration governance has further increased. The Watch the Med Alarm Phone, the Migrant Offshore Aid Station, Seawatch, SOS Méditerranée, Jugend Rettet, Sea-Eye, and Helpatross are only some of the initiatives and organisations aiming specifically to decrease deaths at sea that have newly emerged in the last 2 years, while also long-established organisations such as Greenpeace and Médecins Sans Frontières began search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean Sea for the first time in this period. Other initiatives have sprung up to support those who have survived the crossing on their journey through Europe, or once arrived in their destination countries. In part, such initiatives – at times rather critical of EU border policies and practices – are responses to the deadly consequences of the long-standing securitisation of migration and the absence of legal entry routes to the European Union for much of the world’s population. In 2014-2015 alone, more than 7000 deaths were recorded in the Mediterranean (IOM 2016).

What this thesis seeks to contribute

Empirical and methodological insights

With its focus on the relationships between security, human rights, and humanitarianism in the self-representations of Frontex, this thesis is situated at the intersection of critical border and migration studies and critical security studies. It provides an empirical contribution to these fields by offering insights into Frontex, an organisation that has faced much criticism but has often remained relatively opaque

and inaccessible from the outside. Most analyses and commentaries on Frontex rely on analysing written materials rather than interviews or field visits, with some notable exceptions (e.g. Aas and Gundhus 2015; Pallister-Wilkins 2015). This thesis aims to contribute to these studies by providing further insights regarding the understandings and perceptions of those working for or with the agency. By using ‘nonlocal’ methods rather than focusing on one particular site of Frontex’s interventions, I provide insights into how discursive formations and interpretations circulate within the agency (see G. Feldman 2012). Insights into Frontex that move beyond analyses of public statements are of importance not only because there is a lack of empirical knowledge about the internal workings of this agency, but also because Frontex plays a unique role in the border regime.

From “risk analyses” to discussions in the European Parliament, interviews in the press, research and development work, and deliberations within the agency’s management board, to joint operations at specific external borders, trainings, and deportation flights, Frontex enacts borders at a variety of sites and in diverse contexts. Examining shifts in its self-representation, as well as contradictions and divergences within the agency allows for developing a better understanding of the agency’s border performances across these sites. “Border agents and state bureaucrats play a critical role in determining where, how, and on whose body a border will be performed” (Wonders 2006, 66). Numerically small in comparison to member states’ border agents and state bureaucrats, Frontex is among the bureaucracies which conceptualise the border as well as performing it on site, while seeking to ‘harmonise’ standards of border practices across member states. As such, how it enacts and conceptualises borders through its various practices is of particular interest to those studying EUropean external border governance.

Relatedly, this thesis also seeks to contribute a nuanced account of the various rationalities at work within Frontex. While sociological and political theory approaches in critical security studies have made important contributions to understanding the constructions of particular issues as matters of security, and to analysing how security functions as a mode of government, there has been a tendency

within some of these works to assume the existence of overarching rationalities in security organisations or entire security fields as explanatory forces (Bröckling, Krasmann, and Lemke 2011; Petersen 2012; Walters 2015). Rather than viewing changes in Frontex's self-representations *a priori* as functions of and subordinated to the discursive formation of security (see e.g. Bigo 2002a, 79), this thesis remains open to the coexistence of multiple rationalities, which might conflict with each other or vary across different aspects of the agency's work. Combining organisational sociology with a Foucauldian analysis, it provides a diversified account of the agency's self-representations that eludes the imposition of any single rationality of government.

Simultaneously, this thesis, its choice of methods and the flexibility in its research design provide insights into researching security and other relatively inaccessible organisations. While researching organisations will almost always require a fair amount of trust-building and / or negotiation, security agencies are often particularly concerned about outsiders gaining information about them and their work, and defend their secrecy by pointing to the security threats they seek to address. Given the specific field they research, scholars within critical security studies have been acutely aware of such access limitations (see Salter 2013a). New institutionalist analyses on the other hand are mostly premised on extensive if not full access to organisations, including internal deliberations, documents, meetings, and discussions. While gaining full access to security organisations for research purposes might often prove extremely difficult if not impossible, my thesis seeks to show how an open-ended, experimental, and multi-faceted research approach can elicit valuable insights where access limitations persist, by combining formalised interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and informal conversations. As such, it demonstrates that organisational analysis can provide important contributions to understanding change and continuity in security organisations also where full access cannot be negotiated.

Deepening analyses in critical security studies

Within critical security studies, the thesis primarily speaks to the political sociology approaches originally associated with Didier Bigo, Anastassia Tsoukala, and Elspeth

Guild, and further developed by Jef Huysmans and Claudia Aradau, among others. Didier Bigo's research has produced important insights into the emergence of practices in the border regime, and the heterogeneous ways in which these practices enact securitisation. In his work, he seeks to explain "why the discursive formations of securitization continue to be so powerful even when alternative discursive formations are well known, and why the production of academic and alternative discursive formations has so little effect in either the political arena or in daily life" (Bigo 2002a, 65). According to Bigo, security professionals share an 'ethos' of shared knowledge and secrecy, which creates a community in which insiders – i.e. security professionals, be they local, national, or international, public or private – can make claims that are believed without evidence, whereas outsiders struggle to enter the field, particularly if they do not speak the same language. His analyses focus mostly on inter-agency rivalries, i.e. on the competition between various police, military, and other security forces over threat definitions, prioritisation, and competences. He argues that "all the institutions dealing with coercion, both internally and externally, have the same interest: to perpetuate the existence of their profession" (Bigo 2006, 393).

While this might be partly true, Bigo neglects the complexity of intra-organisational dynamics in his analysis. Focusing on the 'social universes' (Bigo 2014) and professional socialisation of security actors allows analysts to understand some of the divisions and competitions, but it fails to take the organisational dynamics of security agencies into account, which influence developments in the wider field. Bigo notes that "security agencies cannot be understood in terms of a reaction to a given stimulus. Rather, they are 'semi-autonomous'" (Bigo 2006, 390). At the same time, however, he stops short of providing an account of how the internal workings of these 'semi-autonomous' actors influence practices, interpretations, and the agencies' positioning in the wider field. Indeed, he argues that "the definitions of threats and the priority of the fight against insecurity can mostly be explained by inter-agency rivalry and by the politicisation of matters of public security" (Bigo 2006, 391). Intra-agency rivalries, competitions, and dynamics do not feature in his account, which seems to rely on a conceptualisation of security agencies as mostly unitary and coherent. This however

stands in stark contrast to insights gained in organisational sociology, where new institutionalist approaches have offered a more complex image of organisations as fragmented and heterogeneous, and as having several, potentially competing, goals and ambitions.

Drawing on new institutionalism, Christina Boswell (2007, 2008) has criticised scholars in critical security studies for oversimplifying organisational dynamics within the security field. While the expansion of power is a goal many organisations have, there are other objectives that weigh in on organisational strategies and practices. Boswell (2008) problematizes that organisations often face conflicting external pressures to which they seek to respond in order to maintain legitimacy, while also attempting to uphold internal understandings and belief systems. Following her critique, I argue that work in critical security studies more generally, and Didier Bigo's work in particular, would profit from a cross-fertilisation with organisational sociology. This would allow for analyses to move beyond a focus on inter-agency competition to include an appraisal of the complexities within security organisations themselves. Such a deepening of analyses has become particularly timely due to recent developments: contrary to Bigo's vision of the security field as one of insiders who cannot or do not want to respond to alternative discursive formations, we have seen the increasing strengthening of humanitarianism and human rights discursive formations not only in the border regime overall, but also specifically among security professionals, as the example of Frontex illustrates.

Understanding these changes requires moving beyond viewing security organisations as unitary, single-minded actors, instead exploring the dynamics and contradictions within these institutions as well as examining their perceptions of and interactions with their wider environment. Casting doubt on Bigo's claims that security professionals are 'deaf' to alternative discursive formations, and that security agencies aim to "perpetuate the existence of their profession" only (Bigo 2006, 393), Frontex's recent developments towards humanitarianism and human rights in particular demonstrate that a more nuanced analysis of organisational change is called for. As I will argue in greater depth in chapter 1, this thesis will show how critical security studies and

organisational sociology can mutually benefit from building on each other's insights and analyses in understanding continuity and change in the security field.

Extending debates on humanitarianism and human rights

With its specific focus on the relationship between humanitarianism, human rights, and security, this thesis further speaks to critical enquiries into the connections between militarisation, war, violence, and security on the one hand, and human rights and humanitarianism on the other hand. While these discursive formations tend to be seen as opposed to one another in public debates and some academic writings, several authors have exposed the often intricate linkages between them. Didier Fassin (2012) has analysed the entanglement of humanitarianism and security in the governing of the Sangatte camp in France among other places, and has been influential in his explorations of the prevalence of “humanitarian reason” in the contemporary world. Miriam Ticktin (2006, 2011) has shown how humanitarianism works as a strategy of government and control in France, where an opening of humanitarian residence permits in case of severe illnesses was accompanied by a closing down of more regular, rights-based routes. Michel Agier (2010, 30) has referred to humanitarianism as “a form of policing”, and problematized its working as a strategy of control in refugee camps. There have also been critical accounts of the connections between human rights and violence, notably by Costas Douzinas (2007) and Wendy Brown (2004), who problematized the entanglement of human rights with notions of empire and liberal imperialism.

What this thesis seeks to add to these accounts is a reflection on how all three discursive formations relate to one another in contemporary border governance. While Claudia Aradau (2004b, 2008) examined the working together of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in the governance of human trafficking, she treated their convergence as an exception in the wider field of border governance, arguing that “[c]ompared to the more straightforward examples of securitization such as migration, trafficking is a peculiar case, as it has witnessed a move from state security to a humanitarian approach” (Aradau 2008, 98). Moreover, Aradau failed to distinguish

between humanitarian and human rights actors in her analysis. While her in-depth analysis of the cooperation between humanitarian / human rights actors and security organisations in governing human trafficking provides highly valuable insights into their working together in practice (see chapters 1 and 2), she falls short of providing a wider reflection on the relationships between all three discursive formations, and the tensions and differences between human rights and humanitarianism in particular. While both discursive formations might blur in the practices of some NGOs and international organisations, Frontex mobilises them differently, distinguishing carefully in positioning itself vis-à-vis humanitarianism on the one hand and human rights on the other hand. Accordingly, this thesis argues that there are important differences between humanitarianism and human rights not only on a theoretical level, but also in the way they are enacted and appropriated in border governance today, which merit further reflection and analysis.

Importantly, reflections on how humanitarianism, human rights, and security work together speak not only to the academic debates regarding their connections cited above. In addition, the empirical insights and theoretical reflections regarding their entanglement in contemporary border governance presented in this thesis are of high relevance also to those who wish to oppose exclusionary and violent border controls in their daily practices. Activists, NGOs, scholars, and commentators relying on humanitarianism and human rights in order to critique a security-focused border regime might inadvertently contribute to the further securitisation of migration. What my thesis seeks to offer is a problematization of the close relationships between humanitarianism, human rights, and security as they are articulated in EUropean border governance today. In doing so, I hope to open up space for a renewed reflection on what effective opposition to highly violent and exclusionary policies and practices might look like in this context.

On the thesis time frame

The fieldwork for this thesis took place between May 2013 and September 2014. While some of my interviewees were already expressing expectations that arrival numbers in Europe were set to increase in the near future, the dramatic scenes that would unfold across the continent in 2015 and continue into 2016 were not foreseen by anyone I spoke with. Given the forcefulness with which migration has come to the forefront of public debates and media coverage since I conducted my last interview, as well as the sheer magnitude of both arrivals and deaths, I decided to limit my analysis in this thesis to the first ten years of Frontex's existence, examining the years 2005-2014. In light of last year's events, new fieldwork would be warranted to adequately comment on these most recent developments, and the interpretations of them by Frontex staff, management, and guest officers. At the same time, what I explore in this thesis has not lost its pertinence or accuracy. Indeed, the arguments I make about Frontex's repositioning, internal fragmentation, and the entanglement of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in contemporary EUropean border governance have been clearly reflected in the events unfolding over the last 18 months.

Importantly, Frontex has remained at the forefront of debates about how to respond to stark increases in deaths and arrival numbers, including through renewed proposals to transform the agency into a European Border and Coast Guard (European Commission 2015a). Illustrating the close association of Frontex with search and rescue, the agency's budget for operations Triton and Poseidon was tripled in direct response to the deaths of more than 800 individuals in a single incident on April 18, 2015 (European Council 2015). While the thesis is focused on the 10 years between 2005 and 2014, the discussions and findings presented in it have thus remained relevant since then. In the epilogue, I will reflect on some key developments since January 1st, 2015, and their relationship to the findings and arguments presented in this thesis.

A brief note on terminology

Before proceeding to outline the individual chapters of this thesis, I would like to make a brief note regarding the choice of terminology in this text. Writing about mobility and borders at a time when the word “migrant” itself has become intricately bound up with a whole range of negative associations constitutes a challenge. While xenophobia and racism have been prominent factors in the responses to migration and boat arrivals by EUropean publics for decades, debates on migration have become increasingly toxic, and nationalisms across EUrope have been flaring up violently as boat arrivals increased again over the last two years. In 2002, Didier Bigo wrote that “[m]igrant, as a term, is the way to designate someone as a threat to the core values of a country, a state, and has nothing to do with the legal terminology of foreigners” (Bigo 2002a, 71). Today, this statement might be more accurate than ever before. Last autumn, several media outlets joined in a discussion and problematization of the negative connotations of the term “migrant”, highlighting how it dehumanised the deaths and suffering of millions of people (see e.g. Malone 2015; Marsh 2015; Pritchard 2015; Taylor 2015). As the terms “refugee” and “asylum seeker” have formal legal meanings which should be preserved, and have also become negatively charged (Braithwaite 2016), this thesis seeks to avoid such concepts. Instead, it uses terms such as “individuals”, “people”, or “persons” wherever possible to emphasise a simple fact: those who drown in the Mediterranean, who are pushed back by border guards, left in dire conditions in camps within or outside EUrope, or who successfully manage to traverse the many borders of the European Union, are above and before all else, human beings.

Outline of chapters

In the first chapter, I situate the thesis in the wider literatures of critical border and migration studies and critical security studies. By introducing the works within critical border studies that this thesis speaks to, I explain the relevance of studying a border security agency such as Frontex, which actively performs the borders of the European

Union through its various activities, shaping both conceptions and practices of bordering. Moreover, I position the thesis in the critical security studies literature, outlining how it contributes to this body of work by complementing it with the insights gained in organisational sociology and new institutionalism. In chapter 2, I explore humanitarianism, human rights, and security as separate yet related discursive formations. After introducing each of them in turn in their historical context, I then proceed to examine their commonalities and shared foundations, as well as points of tension between them. In doing so, I argue that the shared foundations of the three discursive formations have created the conditions of possibility for the appropriation of human rights and humanitarianism by state and security actors, and for the emergence of new coalitions of actors in EU border governance.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods and methodological approach this thesis is based on, and explains how I proceeded with negotiating access and conducting my fieldwork. In addition, it offers reflections on how my own background and positioning influenced my research, and considers the limitations of this research project. Chapters 4 to 6 present the findings of the research itself. In chapter 4, I provide two different perspectives on Frontex, examining how its foundation has come to be understood as a compromise between different EU institutions, and how the agency can be understood through its public documents. More specifically, I present a qualitative analysis of Frontex's annual reports and press releases from its foundation in 2005 until the end of 2014. In doing so, I trace how the agency's self-representation has changed over time, and how it has increasingly integrated humanitarianism and human rights in its narratives about itself and its work, as well as migration and EUropean border controls. While chapter 4 provides two perspectives from the outside by looking at publicly available documents and statements, the following chapter complements this with a third perspective, exploring the data gathered in interviews and informal conversations, at events, and during visits of the joint operations Poseidon Land in Bulgaria and Hermes in Italy.

Chapter 5 finds that there are stark divergences between Frontex's public documents, the narratives presented by staff members in its headquarters, and those implementing

Frontex operations at EUropean external borders. Drawing on new institutionalism, I argue that Frontex faces inconsistent demands from diverse stakeholders in its environment, whose support is often of existential importance to the agency. Having to respond to diverse and opposing pressures to maintain legitimacy and external support, Frontex has decoupled aspects of its work from one another. As a fragmented organisation, Frontex remains flexible in its responses to partially contradictory external pressures.

In chapter 6, I explore the effects of Frontex's changes in self-representation on its position in EUropean border governance. I examine the prevalence of crisis narratives, and argue that Frontex has become positioned as a solution to humanitarian as well as security 'crises' in recent years. Relatedly, I contend that Frontex's appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights has repositioned the agency as a 'civilising force' in EUrope and beyond, strengthening its position in the EUropean border regime. Furthermore, I argue that the shared foundations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security have allowed for the emergence of new coalitions of actors, including Frontex's Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights. Lastly, I caution that a focus on 'sanitising' EUropean borderlands from abuse and death risks further reinforcing already existing efforts to further externalise border controls and the violence associated with them. In the conclusion and epilogue, I reflect on how my findings relate to the events that have taken place since the end of 2014, and offer some reflections on the implications of my research findings for those seeking to oppose the violence and discrimination of the current border system.

Chapter 1: Borders, Security, and the Importance of Organisational Dynamics

By undertaking a study of Frontex's negotiation of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security, and its gradual appropriation of the former two, this thesis draws on three academic fields: critical border and migration studies, critical security studies, and organisational sociology. Primarily, the thesis situates itself at the intersection of critical border and migration studies on the one hand, and critical security studies on the other hand: it centrally builds on conceptualisations of borders and securitisation developed in these fields, and seeks to contribute empirical and theoretical insights to ongoing debates within them. The interest of critical border studies in bordering processes has at times become synonymous with the studying of securitisation processes in critical security studies, due to the increasing securitisation of migration and border controls in EUrope over the last two to three decades. From a perspective of border studies, Frontex is one of the actors performing EUropean external borders on a daily basis and in a variety of contexts, ranging from the production of knowledge to training national border guards to conducting joint operations at EUropean external borders. From the perspective of critical security studies, Frontex is a security agency which engages in (in)securitising migration and borders through diverse practices, while competing with other security actors over threat definitions, resources, and competences.

By examining how borders and border guarding are represented by those working with and for the agency, and how various discursive formations are manoeuvred by them when doing so, the thesis shows that the discursive formation of security does not exist in isolation, but has become increasingly entangled with humanitarianism and human rights. Furthermore, it explores (some of) the bordering and securitising processes performed by Frontex, and shows that these are neither uniform nor coherent across sites. In doing so, the thesis draws on organisational sociology in order to shed light on the organisational dynamics within Frontex, and argues that cross-fertilising critical

border and critical security studies with organisational literatures adds an additional layer of analysis to existing accounts of development and change in the border regime.

This chapter will position the thesis in the fields of critical border and migration studies and critical security studies, outlining the main propositions that have been made in both fields. Rather than attempting to introduce these bodies of literature in their entirety, I will seek to situate my own work within them, and to highlight some of the contributions this thesis makes to them. After introducing both literatures, I will show how new institutionalist approaches can add to and enrich research at the intersection of critical border studies and critical security studies.

Critical border studies: who borders, where, and how?

In 1994, John Agnew published an influential article in which he critiqued what he described as a ‘territorial trap’ in *International Relations*, referring to the failure of the discipline to engage with the characteristics and contingent nature of states’ spatial practices, and instead assuming an unchanging and unproblematic relationship between states, sovereignty, and territory (Agnew 1994). His work has prompted much discussion since (see e.g. Agnew 2010; Elden 2010; McConnell 2010; Murphy 2010; D. Newman 2010; Reid-Henry 2010; Vaughan-Williams 2008b), and has contributed to the emergence and growth of the field of border studies in the last two decades. Already in 1998, Anssi Paasi asserted that “[a]n increasingly critical attitude exists towards the state and boundaries as categories that are taken for granted, and this can also be seen in a new interest in boundary literature” (Paasi 1998, 70). Since then, this critical approach and the corresponding literature has further expanded and diversified.

What unites many border scholars is the conviction that borders are “central to any understanding of the social” (Rumford 2006, 166). They are opposed to viewing borders as natural, neutral, or static, emphasising instead their historical contingency, political implications, and change through time (see e.g. Vaughan-Williams 2009a, 1). Scholars within critical border studies oppose methodological nationalism, i.e. the taking for granted of the categories of states, sovereignty, state borders and

territoriality, and also problematize methodological EUropeanism (De Genova 2013a; Garelli and Tazzioli 2013a; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Borders are understood to be closely bound up with the politics of representation, identity, and classification (Paasi in Johnson et al. 2011, 62). They create epistemic limits and subjectivities, influencing our perception of ourselves and the world around us: “what can be demarcated, defined, and determined maintains a constitutive relation with what can be thought” (Balibar 2002, 87). While everyday life inside states can render borders invisible or hidden (for some), assumptions regarding community, belonging, identity, sovereignty, territory and law become apparent in moments of border crossing (Salter 2012, 739).

In Western media, the border has risen to be a “privileged signifier”, as William Walters points out: “it operates as a sort of meta-concept that condenses a whole set of negative meanings, including illegal immigration, the threat of terrorism, dysfunctional globalization, loss of sovereignty, narcotic smuggling, and insecurity” (Walters 2008, 174–175). According to Walters, the border has become naturalised in public debates, being invoked as self-evident and unquestionable, and promising protection from the very threats it invokes. Challenging this naturalisation, scholars in critical border studies seek to “decentre the border”, arguing that “the border is not something that straightforwardly presents itself in an unmediated way. It is never simply ‘present’, nor fully established, nor obviously accessible. Rather, it is manifold and in a constant state of becoming” (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012, 728). To understand the contingency and political character of borders, critical border studies advocates a double shift away from traditional conceptions of borders: first, a move from the concept of borders towards the notion of bordering as a social, political, and cultural process; and second, the use of the lens of performance to highlight bordering practices as being constantly produced and reproduced (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012, 729).

Focusing on bordering processes makes clear that borders are not viewed as static or fixed, and that on the contrary their inscription requires constant renewal – as does, in fact, the keeping alive of the institution of the state itself (Johnson et al. 2011):

“[s]emantically, the word ‘borders’ unjustly assumes that places are fixed in space and time, and should rather be understood in terms of bordering, as an ongoing strategic effort to make a difference in space among the movements of people, money or products” (van Houtum and van Naerssen 2002, 126). Importantly, bordering practices are not only practiced by states. Non-state actors, ordinary citizens and non-citizens are involved in this process, which Rumford calls borderwork (Rumford in Johnson et al. 2011; Rumford 2012). Borderwork is thus not solely the domain of largely exclusionary, securitising state practices, but refers to the whole range of bordering processes enacted by citizens, non-citizens, and state actors: “[w]hat a border is, and what a border does, is being made on site” (Walters 2015, 15). Also the lens of performativity to understand bordering processes points to the enactment of or resistance against borders by border-crossers, citizens, governments, and other agents (Johnson et al. 2011; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012; Wonders 2006). “[A]lthough states attempt to choreograph national borders, often in response to global pressures, these state policies have little meaning until they are ‘performed’ by state agents or by border crossers” (Wonders 2006, 66). As such, border agents and state bureaucrats play central roles in the performing of borders in specific locales, ways, and on particular bodies.

In addition to advocating a dynamic and performative understanding of bordering, critical border scholars seek to complicate the traditional metaphor of borders as lines on maps and between territories (Rumford in Johnson et al. 2011; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012; Parker and Vaughan-Williams et al. 2009; Salter 2012). Particularly in the cases of the European Union and the United States, numerous authors have pointed out that today, bordering and exclusion are not only performed at the political borders, but increasingly also within states’ territories, and indeed far beyond them: “[t]he border is everywhere that an undesirable is identified and must be kept apart, ‘detained’ and then ‘expelled’” (Agier, 2011, p. 50; see also Johnson et al., 2011; Vaughan-Williams, 2008b). What might be visible as a formidable barrier to some, however, is often invisible to others: Rumford (2012) points to Frontex patrols in the Mediterranean and off the West African coast as one example of borders that are

displaced from the political borders of EUrope. While being highly visible to those they aim to deter or intercept, they are mostly invisible to EUropean citizens.

For particular categories of people, then, borders seem to be disappearing: they are crossed with increasing speed and frequency by commodities and information, as well as some people. As such, borders mean radically different things for different people in different contexts and at different points in time (Paasi 1998, 81; Rumford 2012, 892). In Étienne Balibar's words,

[b]orders are vacillating. This does not mean that they are disappearing. Less than ever is the contemporary world a 'world without borders'. On the contrary, borders are being both multiplied and reduced in their localization and their function; they are being thinned out and doubled, becoming borders *zones, regions, or countries* where one can reside and live. The quantitative relation between 'border' and 'territory' is being inverted (Balibar 2002, 92, emphasis in original).

Balibar notes that this has profound consequences for the relationships between state, citizenship and nationality, which are increasingly disintegrated (see also Bigo 2013). Nevertheless, and countering some of Balibar's assertions, Salter notes the uniqueness of state borders, the crossing of which means the possibility of appealing to laws in a particular country (Salter 2012, 750).⁶ The enormous efforts and risks many take in order to reach EUrope, as well as EUropean investments in 'securing' its external borders to hinder unauthorised crossings confirm this assertion, as unauthorised travellers and member states alike know that only the physical crossing of member states' political borders will oblige the latter to provide international protection to those in need.

Within critical border studies, overlapping and dispersed forms of migration and border government within EUrope have been understood by means of the concept of the border regime (see e.g. Berg and Ehin 2006; Bigo 2002b; Buckel and Wissel 2010;

⁶ As legal cases such as the ECHR's 2012 *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy* have shown, however, crossing state borders is not always necessary to enter a particular state's jurisdiction. On a theoretical level, Vaughan-Williams (2008b) showed in relation to Guantanamo Bay that the relationship between state borders, territory, and law is far from straightforward.

Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; Hess 2012; Sciortino 2004; Tazzioli 2013; Tsianos and Karakayali 2010; van Houtum 2010; Walters 2002). “Put simply, a border regime is a system of control, regulating behaviour at the borders” (Berg and Ehin 2006, 54). Regime analysis was developed by International Relations scholars when different agents, including ‘non-traditional’ ones such as NGOs and multinational corporations, were becoming progressively more intertwined with one another (Tsianos and Karakayali 2010). The notion of regimes sought to overcome some of the limits of neo-realism, expanding the focus of analysis to include the multiplicity of actors involved. A regime is defined as a heterogeneous ensemble of “principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures” (Wolf 1994, cited in Tsianos and Karakayali 2010, 375). Following Foucault, states cannot be seen as unitary actors, which function smoothly according to a centralised rationality (Foucault 1991, 103). Instead, they might be better conceptualised as “an amalgamation of heterogeneous and sometimes competing state apparatuses” (Buckel and Wissel 2010, 37). In the governance of EUropean external borders, a range of such state apparatuses rooted in different member states interact with a variety of other actors, including EUropean institutions, international organisations, and non-state actors such as citizens, local residents, people on the move, activists, and nongovernmental organisations.

Due to the diversity of those actors and their objectives, the border regime cannot be expected to follow one central logic or rationality. Instead, its developments should be conceived as ‘field effects’ of the actions of a variety of actors (Tsianos and Karakayali 2010, 376). Policy created within the EUropean border regime has accordingly been understood as composite policy resulting from the involvement of policymakers from different sectors, who have diverging perceptions and preferences (Berg and Ehin 2006, 54). Policies pertaining to external borders touch diverse policy paradigms, and involve a range of actors – including those working within Justice and Home Affairs, European Neighbourhood Policy, and Regional Policy. These different actors’ involvement explains the multiplicity of discourses about the external border not only between state and non-state actors, but indeed within the EUropean policymaking community itself (Berg and Ehin 2006). The notion of a border regime allows space

for the historical contingency of border governance, which is the outcome of “a mix of implicit conceptual frames, generations of turf wars among bureaucracies and waves after waves of ‘quick fix’ to emergencies, triggered by changing political constellations of actors” (Sciortino 2004, 32–33). Implementation of rules in local contexts varies considerably, leading to considerable differences in the carrying out of border controls and related practices between member states (Tsianos and Karakayali 2010, 382). As a result of inconsistencies both at the level of policy and discourse and that of implementation, the “border regime is likely to remain uneven, differentiated and highly context-dependent also in the future” (Berg and Ehin 2006, 67).

Approaches drawing on Foucault’s concept of governmentality feature prominently in critical border studies, and allow for the kinds of contradictions, ambiguities, and gaps discussed above (Fassin 2011; Walters 2015). Foucault used governmentality in different ways in his work, referring to it both as “the art of government” in a broader sense and the emergence of a particular, liberal governmentality in the 18th century, which he saw as closely linked with security apparatuses (Foucault 2009). Importantly, Foucault’s understanding of security is different from ‘traditional’ notions of security as related to exceptionalism and war, and is instead closely bound up with freedom of circulation, calculations of probability, and risk (Bigo 2008). In Foucault’s work, security “is not a form of war and is not a form of generalised surveillance. It is not a byproduct of the exception setting the norm, and even not a byproduct of the panopticon. It is not about the supervision of all by the sovereign’s glance. It is about the production of a category, of a profile” (Bigo 2008, 100). Foucault advocated conceptualising government as the range of “techniques and procedures for directing human behavior” (Foucault 1997, 81), and emphasised two complementary meanings of the term, encompassing both the government of others and of the self: “[f]or to “conduct” is at the same time to “lead” others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities” (Foucault 1982, 789). Importantly, governing also produces subjects in two senses of the word: “subject to someone else by control and

dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault 1982, 781).

Foucauldian notions of governmentality and subjectivity have allowed critical border scholars to analyse bordering processes as producing governable populations of ‘citizens’ or ‘legitimate travellers’, of ‘strangers’, ‘guest workers’, ‘refugees’, or ‘illegals’ (Balibar 2009, 204; Buckel and Wissel 2010, 38; Casas-Cortes et al. 2015, 84). “Borders, in this sense, may be considered to be a kind of means of production – for the production of space, or indeed, the production of difference in space, the production of spatial difference” (De Genova 2013a, 254). The fragmentation of populations into different subgroups provides legitimacy for “exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (Foucault 2003, 256). In EUropean border governance, a schism separates the Global North from the Global South, opposing the subject position of the ‘EUropean’ to that of the ‘non-EUropean’ in a wider postcolonial discourse (Buckel and Wissel 2010, 38; see also Salter 2012, 739), and subjecting the latter to necropolitics, i.e. the “subjugation of life to the power of death” (Mbembe 2003, 39). As a ‘means of production’, borders also produce representations and border spectacles of illegality, exclusion, and enforcement (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; Cuttitta 2014; De Genova 2010, 2013b; Dines, Montagna, and Ruggiero 2015). Meanwhile, a variety of authors have argued that in doing so, borders simultaneously produce an illegalised, disenfranchised labour force, which is contrary to what the enforcement spectacle might suggest not excluded, but differentially included and exploited in EUropean labour markets (Balibar 2009; De Genova 2002, 2010, 2013b; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

Despite having made important contributions to conceptualising border and migration governance, William Walters expresses concerns that the governmentality *lens* offered by Foucault has become a *filter* in parts of contemporary migration research: “[a]n instrument intended to enhance the intelligibility of certain patterns turns into a device that filters out unexpected colours and hues from the world” (Walters 2015, 5). Similarly, Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke (2011) remark *vis-à-vis* studies of

governmentality more widely than scholars tend to focus too much on already familiar meta-narratives, producing repetitive critiques that become part of the academic common sense. They as well as Walters deplore a search for singular or homogeneous rationalities of government. When looking at Frontex in particular, it is apparent that the agency negotiates more than one discursive formation in its self-representation. This thesis seeks to examine how different discursive formations are manoeuvred in the narratives of those working for and with Frontex in different locations and functions.

A further criticism of critical border studies concerns the tendency of scholars to engage in presentism, focusing on contemporary events, governmentalities, and techniques of power without connecting them to a wider historical context, centrally including histories of colonialism (Walters 2015). As Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) point out, subjectivities and epistemologies reproduced through bordering today find their origin during colonial and imperial times, being closely connected to imaginaries ‘the West’ projected on different parts of the world (see also De Genova 2013b; Mignolo 2000). Hansen and Jonsson (2011, 2012, 2014) on the other hand demonstrate how the history of EU integration as well as the development of EUropean migration governance shows clear continuities with colonial EUrope’s understandings of itself, of Africa, and of the relationship between the two continents. As Walters notes, in analysing contemporary developments it is important to ask “what is the genesis of the mechanisms that make up migration policy? Where did political sovereignty find these tools?” (Walters 2015, 17). Accordingly, the discursive formations of human rights, humanitarianism, and security as they (re-)surface in the EUropean border regime today need to be situated in their broader historical context, which I will seek to do in chapter 2.

Contrary to some other variants of migration and border research, scholars within critical border studies position themselves politically vis-à-vis the processes of exclusion and marginalisation they analyse:

[w]e, as researchers or scholars of migration, are indeed ‘of the connections’ between migrants’ transnational mobilities and the political, legal, and border-policing regimes that seek to orchestrate, regiment, and manage their energies. We are ‘of’ these connections because there is no ‘outside’ or analytical position beyond them. There is no neutral ground. The momentum of the struggle itself compels us, one way or the other, to ‘take a side’ (De Genova 2013a, 252).

Over the last few years, researchers in critical border and migration studies in the UK and beyond have come together in conferences and common writing projects to think through practices of ‘militant research’, which aims to identify openings for rupture within states’ attempts to ‘manage’ migration, and to destabilise highly exclusionary and violent border regimes (see e.g. Casas-Cortes et al. 2015; De Genova 2013a; Garelli and Tazzioli 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Grappi 2013; Kasparek and Speer 2013; New Keywords Collective 2016; Pezzani and Heller 2013; Scheel 2013; Sossi 2013). This thesis seeks to continue some of these conversations.

Critical security studies

The growing securitisation of migration and border controls over the last 20-30 years has been one of the themes researchers in critical border studies have been particularly interested in. They share this interest with those working within critical security studies, leading to an overlap and partial blurring of both academic fields around questions of migration and borders. This thesis is positioned at the intersection of critical migration and border studies and critical security studies, which share an engagement with the securitisation of migration and border controls. Critical security studies emerged as a separate field from strategic studies in the 1980s and early 1990s, when academic efforts to interpret security questions in a wider way coincided with pressures from social movements to include non-military issues as part of the security agenda, and the perceived need to respond to the end of the Cold War also theoretically (Huysmans 2006a, 18; Krause and Williams 1996, 229). In the 1990s, academic understandings of security expanded significantly, covering concerns for the environment, inter-ethnic tensions, and migration (Aradau 2008, 43). At the same time, the political world also saw an “explosion of security questions”, when more and more

issues were understood and debated through a security lens (Huysmans 1998a, 248). Since these early beginnings, a wealth of literature has emerged which engages with security in a ‘widened’ or ‘deepened’ way (see Krause and Williams 1996).

The following section will present a brief overview of the field of critical security studies. Far from providing a comprehensive account of the diverse body of scholarship within this field, I will highlight key concepts, debates, and developments, with a particular emphasis on the theoretical approaches this thesis seeks to speak and contribute to. Frequently, three ‘Schools’ have been identified within the field of critical security studies, each of which is associated with different approaches: the Copenhagen, Aberystwyth, and Paris ‘Schools’ of security studies. As the c.a.s.e. collective (2006) pointed out, such a differentiation can be misleading, as clear-cut dividing lines are difficult to draw and common ground, collaborations, and academic debates exist across the approaches. The following discussion about different ‘Schools’ should therefore be read as means to structure a diverse field with a variety of approaches, rather than a representation of three clearly distinct, separate sets of theories. Listing ‘Schools’ invariably excludes approaches that are not primarily associated with one of the three main institutions, among them feminist, queer, and postcolonial theories. In order to clearly situate this thesis in the wider field of critical security studies, I will nevertheless introduce the three Schools in turn, while drawing on a wider body of literature to comment on their contributions and limitations.

Moving beyond militaristic security: the ‘Copenhagen School’

The Copenhagen School is rooted in international relations and criticised their discipline’s failure to scrutinise the meaning and construction of security. They opposed previously prevailing approaches taking security as an objective given, opening up a much-needed critical inquiry into academic understandings and the historicity of security. In doing so, they succeeded in widening and deepening the concept of security “without opening it up to an unlimited expansion which would render the concept meaningless for academic and political purposes”, making their approach highly influential in critical security studies (L. Hansen 2000, 288). As such,

the School has been said to “constitute possibly the most thorough and continuous exploration of the significance and the implications of a widening security agenda for security studies” (Huysmans 1998b, 480). The School’s most prominent members are Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. While the Copenhagen School is often counted as part of critical security studies, Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde conceptualised it as distinct from both traditional security studies and Critical Security Studies (i.e. the Aberystwyth School) in outlining their own approach to security studies (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 205).

Broadly speaking, their work focuses on the analysis of securitising speech acts, i.e. of verbal declarations of ‘security issues’ as such. Through securitising acts the securitising actor constructs an intersubjective understanding between herself and her audience “to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat” (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 491). For securitisation to occur, the relevant audience has to accept the securitising act and thereby the use of exceptional measures. The Copenhagen School was part of and built on the linguistic turn in International Relations, emphasising the performative nature of security talk. Rather than merely representing reality, speech acts were understood as generating security threats. In order to securitise successfully, speech acts draw on a larger constellation of meanings related to security, which is historically contingent and socially institutionalised: “[l]ike the grammar of a language, it evolves over time but it cannot be changed at random” (Huysmans 2006a, 25).

Since its initial theory development, the Copenhagen School’s approach has inspired a large amount of scholarship, while also having been criticised for conceptual weaknesses, lack of theoretical refinement, and methodological dilemmas (Balzacq 2011; Stritzel 2007; M. C. Williams 2011). Over the last years, there has been an overall move away from analysing speech acts in isolation, and a development of more contextual and dynamic readings of security (Stritzel 2012, 553). In addition to Wæver’s claim that securitising speech acts can be used to further legitimacy for future acts, Vuori argues that securitisation can serve to raise an issue on the political agenda,

to deter, to legitimate past acts or to uphold the status of a security issue, and to exert control (Vuori 2008, 76). He also notes that securitizing speech acts cannot only be made by the ‘powers that be’, but also by other actors with sufficient social capital (Vuori 2010). Stritzel (2007, 2011a, 2011b, 2012) argues for the importance of taking socio-political contexts and historical developments into account, whereas Ciută advocates a radically contextual approach, relying entirely on actors’ self-perceptions, definitions and practices in relation to security (Ciută 2009, 325–326). The meaning of security would then be open-ended and change through time, rather than being based on some essential core, as the Copenhagen School’s focus on existential threats to a referent object’s survival implies.

Other authors point out that an exclusive focus on speech acts is problematic: issues can be securitised without necessarily invoking speech acts, for instance by associating a particular policy issue with others that are already viewed as security threats: “even when not directly spoken of as a threat, asylum can be rendered as a security question by being institutionally and discursively integrated in policy frameworks that emphasize policing and defence” (Huysmans 2006a, 4). With its focus on speech acts, the Copenhagen School fails to account for security practices other than speech acts that might further the perception of issues as matters of security, neglecting in particular institutional practices (Aradau 2008, 45). Instead, they presuppose an easy and unidirectional transition from verbal statements about security to practices addressing a proclaimed threat (Boswell 2007; Neal 2009).

Moreover, the School’s implicit privileging of political elites in their analyses has been deemed problematic. Among others, Ken Booth asked “[w]hat about the security threats to those without a political voice?” (Booth 2007, 165). As Lene Hansen points out, security cannot always simply be spoken by those threatened (L. Hansen 2000). The focus on spoken rather than embodied (in)security, according to her, contributes to the absence of gender in the Copenhagen School framework and the inability of the theory to capture gender-specific security threats, such as honour killings of women in Pakistan. Importantly, the question of who is able to make securitising speech acts is

not only gendered, but also intimately bound up with notions of race and class: today's political elites remain, to a large extent, white, wealthy, Western men.

A focus on political elites furthermore undervalues the role of other influential actors, such as security professionals (Huysmans 1998a). Indeed, it presupposes that there are clear moments in which decision-makers make critically important speech acts that lead to securitisation. Studies however suggest that security functions in highly dispersed ways, with algorithms and surveillance technology informing decisions that are frequently based on previous knowledge and automatic or programmed decision-making (Amoore and de Goede 2008a; Huysmans 2011). How these findings might inform the study of security and securitisation will be explored in greater depth below. Lastly, the Copenhagen School has inspired important and fruitful debates on the relationship between exceptionalism, speech acts, and security (see e.g. Aradau 2008; Balzacq et al. 2010; Bigo 2007; Bourbeau 2014; Doty 2007; Huysmans 2004, 2006b, 2008; Huysmans and Buonfino 2008; Neal 2012; Salter 2008). Some of the challenges to the School's conceptualisation of security as bound up with exceptionalism will be further explored in the discussion of the Paris School's approach below.

Security as emancipation: the 'Aberystwyth School'

In addition to Copenhagen School approaches, an alternative critical security scholarship was established by scholars of the 'Aberystwyth' or 'Welsh School', most prominently Richard Wyn Jones and Ken Booth. In an explicitly normative endeavour, they argue that understandings of security as military-focused, state-centred and zero-sum should be countered by conceptualisations of security as aimed at and interlinked with achieving human emancipation (c.a.s.e. Collective 2006, 448). Their view of security is thus an ideal-theoretical one, contrary to the militarised and largely negative conceptualisation the Copenhagen School proposes (Floyd 2007, 330). As such, they do not share the view that *desecuritisation* is necessarily desirable. Instead, they argue that there are good reasons for conceptualising issues such as HIV/AIDS as security threats. Importantly, they highlight "the mobilisation potential that is undoubtedly created by using the term 'security'" (Wyn Jones 1999, 109), and caution that

desecuritisation might remove an issue from a political agenda altogether rather than transforming it from a security into a political issue (Floyd 2007, 347). Securitising an issue, from this perspective, can be a way to galvanise attention and support to address it.

For the Aberystwyth School, phenomena such as war and violence, poverty, poor education, and political oppression are security issues. Fundamentally, security and emancipation are viewed as two sides of the same coin: true security is human emancipation (Booth 1991, 319). Accordingly, the School challenges the state-centrism at the heart of much of security studies: “globally, the sovereign state is one of the main causes of insecurity, it is part of the problem rather than the solution” (Wyn Jones 1995, 310). Instead, Wyn Jones advocates focusing security interchangeably on the individual, society, community, particular ethnic or cultural groups, or humankind. States are merely means to an end, tools to achieve emancipation. As this shows, the Aberystwyth School has a rather different agenda than the Copenhagen School. Their goal is not to analyse how security issues are defined and constructed by those in power today; but instead to look at the world through political theory to determine ‘objective’ threats to individuals (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998, 35). Underlying this practice is the belief that meanings attached to words can and do change over time, and that proactive, normative scholarship can help provoke such change (Booth 2007, 169). The Aberystwyth School critiques the Copenhagen School’s conceptualisation of security as outside of (normal) politics or as depoliticised, and insists that in a broadened security field, it is precisely political decision-making that sets priorities vis-à-vis different threats to emancipation. That unauthorised migration is presented as a security threat to societies and states, first and foremost, and not to those who embark on hazardous journeys due to a lack of safe and legal routes, is ultimately a political choice. Accordingly, it is the task of security scholars to press for a conceptualisation of security that is human instead of state-focused, and that resists militarisation.

Following this approach, the increasing focus on humanitarianism and human rights in the border regime outlined in the introduction might be seen positively, as the

security of those travelling via boat has featured more prominently in public and policy debates over recent years. Capitalising on this and further advancing an understanding of security that is centred on those on the move, however, has significant shortcomings. As Claudia Aradau emphasises, security is inherently exclusionary, relying on conceptualising external threats to a particular in-group:

[w]hat CSS [the ‘Aberystwyth School’] and their equation of emancipation to security have missed is the element of universality that a politics of emancipation entails and security lacks. Security cannot be democratized, it cannot be universally partaken of. Its imaginary is subtended by practices that divide and exclude categories of subjects deemed dangerous or risky (Aradau 2008, 143–144).

Given that security utterances rely on a structure of meaning that – while historically contingent – cannot be changed at random, advancing alternative conceptions of security risks implicitly inscribing concepts and mechanisms of in- and exclusion embedded in understandings of national security in new realms, such as that of ‘human security’ (Huysmans 2006a, 34; see also Fierke 2015, 6). As this thesis will show, invoking the security of those travelling on unseaworthy boats across the Mediterranean might be a laudable attempt to shift the referent object away from borders and states, but it stops short of fundamentally challenging the repertoire of practices traditionally associated with state security, including cooperation with transit or origin countries to stop or deter individuals from making hazardous crossings.

Invoking security, even if in relation to individuals rather than states or societies, moreover tends to call on states to guarantee this security, and to mitigate or eradicate ‘threats’ (Floyd 2008, 44). It may ultimately fall back on and further reinforce a state-centric view. Related to this criticism, Giorgio Shani argues that human security “may be sufficiently malleable to legitimize greater state control over society *in the name of protection*” (Shani 2007, 7, emphasis in original). He cautions that human security might end up reinforcing the state and a focus on national security, as its emphasis is not on transcending the state, but on ensuring that states protect their populations. Similarly, Mark Duffield sees human security as a form of biopolitics allowing a range of global actors to govern populations in various contexts (Duffield 2010; Fierke 2015,

175). Aradau (2004a) further problematizes that equating emancipation with security suggests that social change can occur only within the logic of security.

In addition, Rita Floyd cautions that “the biggest problem with Booth and Wyn Jones’ approach is [that n]either of the two theorists offers guidelines for when an issue is not a security issue, always implying the more security the better” (Floyd 2007, 333). In relation to human security in particular – a notion closely connected to the conceptualisation of individuals as key referent objects for security that has become increasingly prominent in international politics and development – Floyd further notes that “apart from the idea that security should be about individuals, human security entirely lacks a framework of analysis” (Floyd 2008, 42). When examining Frontex’s appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights alongside its continued focus on security, the questions of what enabled this shift to occur, and what its effects are, are not addressed within a Welsh School approach. By asking what security *should* do, it “is explicitly geared to changing the dominant culture of security rather than identifying a new actually existing security logic.” (Corry 2012, 240).

There thus exist important critiques of the Welsh School’s conceptualisation of security, and a range of warnings regarding its call to shift the referent object of security to the individual level. At the same time, Roe (2012) points to the possibility of reclaiming security as a site of contestation over inclusion and exclusion through the Aberystwyth School approach. McDonald states, “it could be argued that the choice within the Copenhagen School to ultimately limit attention to powerful actors and voices blinds its proponents to the role of security as a site of competing discourses or images of politics, and even potentially as a site for emancipation” (McDonald 2008, 575). While Floyd criticises the concept of human security in terms of its limited analytical usefulness, she emphasises its normative utility, noting that this is something the Copenhagen School lacks (Floyd 2008, 2011).

Nunes protests against charges that the concept of ‘emancipation’ is universalist, arguing that instead, “[t]he meaning of security is not based on a universal, a priori notion of what being secure is, but rather stems from the experiences of insecurity of real people in real places” (Nunes 2012, 351). Most importantly, perhaps, Browning

and McDonald note that depictions of security as either entirely ‘good’ or ‘bad’ oversimplify matters, and fail to engage with the temporal and spatial specificity of security: “[the] recognition that security does different things at different times and in different places [is missing]” (Browning and McDonald 2011, 242). While the Welsh School approach does not provide the necessary tools to analyse how Frontex’s shift towards humanitarian and human rights-centred self-representations became possible and which effects it produced, it raises questions that are nevertheless of great importance for this analysis. Not only does it make the normative case against state security, but it also insists on re-claiming security as a site of contestation and potential change. Focusing on individuals’ security, then, might at times have the potential to galvanise attention and support to issues that adversely affect lives and wellbeing. As noted above, however, doing so also risks creating new forms of exclusion, government, and violence.

Practices first: Understandings of the ‘Paris School’

Whereas both previous approaches or ‘Schools’ emerged from within International Relations, scholars in Paris developed their own security analyses roughly at the same time as the Copenhagen School, approaching security from a sociological and political theory perspective (c.a.s.e. Collective 2006, 446). Originally associated with the work of Didier Bigo and his colleagues, including Anastassia Tsoukala and Elspeth Guild, Jef Huysmans did important work defining the specifics of this particular approach and positioning it within critical security studies (c.a.s.e. Collective 2006; Huysmans 2006a). Since its beginnings in Paris, a variety of authors who are not necessarily linked to Paris as a geographical location have built on the School’s approach to security, and have further refined, qualified, and expanded it in their own analyses of security governance (see e.g. Amoore 2006, 2014; Amoore and de Goede 2008b; Aradau 2004b, 2008, 2014; Aradau and van Munster 2007, 2008, 2012a; Brassett and Vaughan-Williams 2012, 2015; Cote-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014; de Goede and Randalls 2009; Squire 2009, 2010; Vaughan-Williams 2008a, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Walters 2002, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2015).

These highly diverse works share in common that they conceptualise security as a technique of government, rather than an essential (if contested) concept. A Foucauldian approach allows for a less unitary and coherent view of the state, seeing it instead as consisting of a variety of practices, institutions, actors, and rationalities (Huysmans 2006a). Security in this approach is understood as “ordering the social” (Aradau 2008, 6), as administering relations of fear and trust between people. It thereby serves to displace what Huysmans referred to as an epistemological fear – “the fear of not knowing who is dangerous” – with an “objectified fear” of particular groups of people (Huysmans 2006a, 53). Security policy tends to be focused on creating or maintaining a distance between an in-group and a threatening ‘other’, and/or eliminating the identified threat. Moreover, the discursive formation of security constructs and reasserts a unified, protection-worthy ‘us’, a political identity of the referent object to be protected, and an equally unified, abject, excluded ‘other’ (Aradau 2008; Huysmans 2006a). At the same time, “[t]he ordering of security based on a dynamics of abjection and of exclusion exposes the very promise of security as an impossible promise” (Aradau 2008, 62).

At times explicitly, at others implicitly, a number of authors taking a sociological / Foucauldian approach to security view the discursive formation of security as distinct from and opposed to preferable alternatives, most importantly humanitarianism and human rights. William Walters wrote of the securitisation of people on the move and their simultaneous “distancing from discourses of democracy, human security, and human rights” (Walters 2002, 570). Also Jef Huysmans repeatedly invoked a “difference” between framing border-crossers in security vs. human rights terms, and referred to human rights as an “alternative” policy framing (Huysmans 2000, 757; see also 1998a, 228; 2006a, 3; 53; 146; Huysmans and Squire 2009, 13). Implied in these differentiations seems to be a preference for human rights-based discourses and approaches over security-focused ones, given the exclusionary effects of the latter. In light of Frontex’s increasing reliance on fundamental rights and humanitarian language, which the agency deploys in addition to a continuing security focus, the apparent opposition between rights-based and humanitarian approaches on the one

hand and security-focused frameworks on the other hand needs to be reconsidered, however.

Regarding the relationship between humanitarianism and security, some authors have noted that despite their apparent opposition, both work together in practice at times. Bigo (2006, 394) and Huysmans (2006a, 5) for instance pointed to “humanitarian interventions” as demonstrating a partial merging of the two frameworks. Moreover, Huysmans and Squire (2009, 6) noted that “pragmatic humanitarians” failed to effectively challenge a security frame, which could accommodate depoliticised, “vulnerable” subjects. In Bigo’s account, securitisation features as the dominant, overarching discursive formation in border governance, which human rights and humanitarian debates hide:

[t]he internal debates [...] between securitarian discursive formations (about blockades, expulsions, deterrence, and surveillance) and humanitarian discursive formations (about the necessity for a welfare state, low birthrates, and human rights for asylum seekers) hide these general conditions of securitization. Indeed, the second type of discursive formation—the humanitarian—is itself a by-product of the securitization process (Bigo 2002a, 79; see also Cuttitta 2014).

Bigo continues by arguing that by advocating the rights of some groups, those mobilising humanitarian discursive formations end up reinforcing the categorisation of migrants, thereby further bolstering the securitisation of migration and justifying border controls. While this might be a valid point to make, this thesis seeks to problematize the seemingly straightforward hierarchy between humanitarianism and securitisation outlined by Bigo. Humanitarianism and human rights have their own dynamics, and are inherently ambivalent and unstable discursive formations. What matters is not necessarily the relative dominance of each of them vis-à-vis security, but their interrelationship and entanglement with one another. By assuming that the discursive formation of security is in some way automatically or unchangeably dominant in border governance, openness to change, friction, contradiction and the constant renegotiation of each of these discursive formations in the practical field of border governance gets lost.

Claudia Aradau (2004b, 2008) has provided one of the first in-depth analyses of the entanglements of security, humanitarianism and human rights from within critical security studies. Examining the governance of human trafficking, she raises pertinent points regarding the cooperation between NGOs and police, the incorporation of a ‘victimisation’ approach within security practices, and the merging of humanitarianism/human rights and security in the governance of trafficked women. In her analysis, Aradau sees trafficking as a ‘special case’ (Aradau 2008, 98). Recent developments however have shown that the convergence of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in the governance of human trafficking has been far from exceptional. Building on Aradau’s work and expanding it to external border governance, Polly Pallister-Wilkins (2015) examines the interrelation of humanitarianism and border policing among Frontex officials and Greek border forces. Following a Foucauldian approach, she shows that in the officers’ narratives, concerns to save and assist unauthorised border crossers go hand in hand with policing objectives. In pointing out that each has been bound up with notions of care and control historically, she argues that “there is nothing contradictory in the use of humanitarian ideas and practices in European border policing” (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 55).

Importantly, Aradau (2008) does not distinguish between humanitarianism and human rights. She seems to use both terms interchangeably, and fails to draw out existing nuances and tensions between them. Pallister-Wilkins (2015) on the other hand differentiates between humanitarianism and human rights. Nevertheless, she focuses her analysis solely on the invocation of humanitarian language by border officials. Indeed, she argues that while using humanitarian framings, “Frontex cannot uphold human rights,” as this remains the sovereign responsibility of member states (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 66). This analysis might be true from a legal perspective. However, it fails to engage how Frontex officials and border guards frame their work in human rights terms, how this is related to their mobilisation of humanitarian and security language, and how it affects the agency’s positioning in the EUropean border regime. Katja Franko Aas and Helene Gundhus (2015) examine humanitarian, human rights, and security framings by Frontex officials and Norwegian border police. Drawing on

Fassin (2007a), they suggest that Frontex engages in “a particular style of ‘humanitarian government’, which deploys moral sentiments in contemporary politics” (Aas and Gundhus 2015, 13). Contrary to Fassin’s observations, their research finds that this does not necessarily weaken the emphasis on human rights, but can coexist with an intensifying rights discourse. Importantly, the authors find differences in framings mobilised by those in Frontex’s headquarters and the guest officers they interview. They however stop short of theorising these, and of analysing the relationships and similarities across humanitarianism, human rights, and security that render their entanglement in border governance possible.

More generally, authors (broadly) associated with the Paris School emphasise the importance of practices, visual representations, institutions, technologies, actors, specific knowledges and skills, and have more recently also drawn increasingly on new materialist approaches in their work (see e.g. Aradau 2010; Aradau, Coward, et al. 2015; Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams 2015; Squire 2015). They focus on practices, contexts, and technologies “that enable and constrain the production of specific forms of governmentality” (c.a.s.e. Collective 2006, 457). In doing so, they are less interested in identifying intentions behind particular uses of power, but instead emphasise the effects of power games, looking at the field effects of competing rationalities, institutions, and actors. A further key difference between the Copenhagen and Paris School approaches is that the former focuses on exceptionalism as integral to security, whereas the latter highlights the importance of routines, day-to-day practices, and bureaucracies in constituting (in)securitisation:⁷

[s]ecuritization works through everyday technologies, through the effects of power that are continuous rather than exceptional, through political struggles, and especially

⁷ Bigo and some of his colleagues refer to (in)securitisation instead of securitisation. This is intended to emphasise that “security does not diminish insecurity and we do not even have two sides generating a dynamics of co-constitution of opposites: we have only one side in a non-orientable surface (as in a Möbius strip) that we have to call (in)security, or an (in)securitization process [...] it means, for example, that border controls and their technologies do not solve the insecurity of borders; they propagate fears of mobility in their everyday routines” (Bigo 2014, 221).

through institutional competition within the professional security field in which the most trivial interests are at stake (Bigo 2002a, 73).

Analysing everyday practices, according to the Paris School, exposes that illiberal rule is not in fact an exception to the rule of liberal-democratic states, but that it is produced through ordinary laws and routines: “[i]t shows how the control of populations is routinized and how unequal access to fundamental rights is a defining feature of the liberal state” (Balzacq et al. 2010; see also Bigo 2007, 2013). Jef Huysmans argues that securitisation works through a “multiplicity of little security nothings”, rather than exceptional speech acts (Huysmans 2011, 376). Indeed, these speech acts themselves are no more than “little security nothings”: they are only one small part of a set of unspectacular and unexceptional practices, devices, or sites that constitute securitisation processes. While security is thus not necessarily bound up with exceptional measures and practices, it alters what is perceived as ‘normal’ in society (c.a.s.e. Collective 2006, 456).

As noted above, Didier Bigo’s work has been influential within (and beyond) the Paris School. From the early 1990s, Bigo analysed the role of security professionals in (in)securitisation processes, and showed how these professionals searched for new focus areas when the end of the Cold War meant that traditional security concerns were being eroded. As new ideas of the enemy were evolving, ‘the immigrant’ became a convenient focus of concern for both police and military forces (Bigo 2006). A common security field emerged in which military personnel and secret services, policemen and border guards met and structured new interpretations of security, and where ‘the immigrant’ figured as an internal and external ‘threat’ simultaneously (Bigo 2002a, 77). In Bigo’s view, political speech acts tend to be *ex post facto* justifications of routine security practices enacting fear and unease, rather than marking the beginning of a securitisation process (Bigo 2014, 211). He draws on political statements as well as media representations in his analyses, but argues that these are largely secondary to practices by security professionals (Bigo 2001). He and his colleagues have argued that “a sociological approach is stronger than a purely linguistic approach to securitization, because it combines discursive and non-

discursive formations, including know-how, gestures, and technology” (Balzacq et al. 2010). Simultaneously, Bigo has also distanced himself from what he refers to as an “over generalization of a certain form of Foucauldianism”, which uses biopolitics as an explanatory tool to make sense of new developments in border governance (Bigo 2014, 220). He questions both the novelty of governmentality by biopolitics, and argues that it cannot be seen as a cause of today’s practices, which he instead understands to be rooted in the professional socialisation of those enacting the border. Instead, he draws heavily on Bourdieu in his work, using the concepts of field and habitus to explain securitisation through the practices of security professionals. As Claudia Aradau pointed out, in his Bourdieusean approach to language Bigo is not far removed from the Copenhagen School: both share a conceptualisation of securitisation as being produced by those in positions of authority.⁸ While Wæver sees securitisation as a political spectacle, however, Bigo emphasises the importance of bureaucracies in constituting this process (Aradau 2008, 48–49). In doing so, he focuses primarily on rivalries between security agencies, who compete for power and the continuity of their existence by contesting or advocating for particular threat definitions, prioritisations, and competences (Bigo 2006). As noted in the introduction, Bigo’s account fails to take dynamics inside organisations seriously, and portrays them as unitary and rational actors. While he makes clear that security agencies do not merely react to external stimuli, but are “semi-autonomous” (Bigo 2006, 390), his account falls short of offering insights into how organisational behaviours come about, and what internal factors influence the actions organisations take. Secondly, Bigo’s account of competitions in the security field suggests that security agencies are primarily or even solely interested in the maximisation of their power and continuation of their existence (Bigo 2006, 393).

Christina Boswell (2007) has criticised both the Paris and the Copenhagen Schools for failing to account for organisational dynamics in the security field. Following her

⁸ This has been criticised by Claudia Aradau, who remarked that both approaches failed to consider the constitution of abject subjectivities and their (in)ability to speak security (Aradau 2008, 57).

critique, this thesis seeks to move beyond accounts of inter-agency competition over power and survival as the primary driver of developments in the security field. Drawing on new institutionalism, it seeks to provide an appraisal of some of the complexities within Frontex as a security organisation. In doing so, this thesis adds an additional layer of analysis to sociological and political theory accounts of the border security field.

New institutionalism and critical security studies

New institutionalist approaches in organisational sociology have engaged with organisational dynamics in-depth, and provide valuable insights in this regard. Challenging the dominant assumption that organisations function rationally and primarily seek to maximise their power, new institutionalist accounts emphasise that there are a range of goals organisations might strive for at different moments in time, including internal and external legitimacy, maintaining a coherent worldview, or acting ‘appropriately’ (Boswell 2007; DiMaggio and Powell 1991a; Greenwood et al. 2008). Rather than being homogenous actors, organisations are understood as fragmented and multifaceted, and driven by a number of potentially conflicting motivations and interests (Greenwood et al. 2008, 14). New institutionalist approaches will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 5, which will explore how insights gained in organisational sociology help understand Frontex’s changes through time as well as the agency’s current self-representation. Rather than introducing these theories in detail, this section will demonstrate how the approaches described above as the ‘Paris School’ of critical security studies speak to and are compatible with new institutionalism.

Combining Paris School approaches with new institutionalism brings together two distinct sets of theories, which however enrich and complement each other. In 2006, Bigo argued that “[i]t is certainly too early to clearly define the centrifugal forces that compel the police and military to share the same interests, the same rules and the same vision of what is at stake (i.e. what the emerging threats are)” (Bigo 2006, 394). This

“startling homogeneity” of organisational rules and structures is what new institutionalist approaches have sought to explain in their analyses (DiMaggio and Powell 1991b, 64). Drawing on new institutionalism can thus provide some insights to Bigo’s puzzle, as processes of organisational change have long been theorised by authors in this field. Paris School approaches more generally have found that even within a highly heterogeneous field of security professionals, “security agencies share the same vision of the threat as a deterritorialized and global one” (Balzacq et al. 2010). Organisational sociology can provide insights into how agencies such as Frontex respond to what they perceive as successful strategies in their environments, and how this might lead to growing similarities between the organisational rules, threat perceptions, and practices of different security organisations (a process referred to as isomorphism within organisational analysis).

A number of institutional analyses in the realm of migration and border governance have already been conducted, and have been widely cited also by scholars within critical security studies. Virginie Guiraudon and Gallya Lahav provided important insights into some of the institutional dynamics underlying EU immigration and border policies (Guiraudon 2000, 2003; Guiraudon and Lahav 2000). They showed that officials of member states’ interior ministries moved responsibilities for migration control to the EU level to avoid domestic constraints, including national courts and NGOs. Sandra Lavenex (2006, 2007) demonstrated that the desire to avoid constraints subsequently led to the increasing externalisation of migration control, which she described as a “continuation of the transgovernmental logic of cooperation” that Guiraudon identified (Lavenex 2006, 346). She argued that responsibility for migration control was shifted ‘up’ to the EU level and ‘out’ to third states, as home affairs officials attempted to avoid political, normative and institutional constraints on policymaking. Guiraudon, Lahav, and Lavenex all show that policy processes in relation to the EU’s external borders are partially shaped by institutional interests and struggles between different actors within states, rather than merely by competition between states. Analysing how the European Commission responded to the task of incorporating immigration and asylum policy in EU external relations, Christina

Boswell (2008) added that also intra-organisational dynamics influence policy outcomes. She cautioned that these internal dynamics should not be underestimated, arguing that actors might be more concerned with internal legitimacy or coherence than with responding to outside pressures, and could not be expected to always act rationally due to internal structures, dynamics, and constraints.

Some of the theoretical understandings of new institutionalism and Paris School approaches are fairly similar, with the former viewing actors and their identities as socially constructed and reflective of their institutional environment (Meyer, Boli, and Thomas 1994). New institutionalist scholars propose a dialectical relationship between action and actor, “see the “existence” and characteristics of actors as socially constructed and highly problematic, and action as the enactment of broad institutional scripts rather than a matter of internally generated and autonomous choice, motivation, and purpose” (Meyer, Boli, and Thomas 1994, 10). This is similar to the critical approaches advocated by Bigo and his colleagues. While Bigo specifically focuses on the professional socialisation of actors, the ‘habitus’ and dispositions of security professionals might well be seen as forming part of the ‘broad institutional scripts’ Meyer et al. refer to. In discussing the three different ‘universes’ of those engaged in different ways with controlling borders, Bigo (2014, 211) outlines general beliefs and perceptions associated with those belonging to the “military-strategic field”, the “internal security field”, and the “global cyber-surveillance social universe” respectively. It is clear that their subject positions as well as their actions cannot be ascribed to autonomous choice alone, but are closely interlinked with wider characteristics of the field they are socialised into. New institutionalists share Bigo’s concern with socialisation, noting that through similar training and education of particular professional groups, these tend to share similar ideas regarding appropriate practices and structures (see DiMaggio and Powell 1991b, 71).

According to organisational sociology, the perception and reputation of organisations and their practices depends on their ability to justify their existence, structures, and actions in relation to generalised discourses:

[t]he definition and standing of the modern organization are constitutively linked to what is legitimate and necessary. In this way, environmental concerns, a broadened conception of worker rights, or more organized conceptions of the economy and its function must be incorporated in the structure and action of the organization (Meyer, Boli, and Thomas 1994, 19).

Generalised discourses thus produce organisational structures, actions, and legitimacy. This also includes those discourses that are not referenced explicitly by Meyer et al., but are essential to critical security studies: discourses on common security threats, generalised risk, border management, and migration, for instance. More importantly, taking a wider view of the institutional environment of the border regime – as indicated in the quote above – enables me to move beyond the discourses most frequently associated with security professionals, and to explore the role of ‘alternative discourses’ such as humanitarianism and human rights in the organisational environment of security actors. Rather than assuming that security agencies will be oblivious to discourses from beyond the security realm, organisational sociology allows for an analysis of how particular, generalised discourses become incorporated by organisations across different fields for a variety of reasons.

Importantly, new institutionalism emphasises that an environment should not be seen as a “coherent rational superactor (e.g., a tightly integrated state or a highly coordinated invisible hand)” but “an evolving set of rationalized patterns, models, or cultural schemes” (Meyer 1994, 33; see also Meyer and Rowan 1991). As such, a number of rationalities might coexist within an organisation’s environment, in which different actors, legal structures, or normative ideas suggest different purposes or procedures to be followed (Scott and Meyer 1994a, 117). Such an understanding is in line with conceptualisations of the border regime – Frontex’s environment – proposed within critical border and security studies. Building on the theoretical insights from critical border studies and the Paris School approach to critical security studies, this thesis views the border regime as highly fragmented, constituted by diverse actors, and not following one central rationality, but instead changing and developing as a result of the interactions and competitions of security professionals, politicians, people on the move, NGOs and international organisations, EUropean institutions, citizens, and other stakeholders.

While building on Foucauldian insights, I agree with Bigo (2014, 220) that governmentality should not be understood as a causal factor or determining force for organisational practices. Similar concerns have also been raised by Christina Boswell (2008, 2009), who argued that instead of merely responding to wider governmentalities, behavioural patterns of organisations might have a variety of other functions, including social-psychological needs for stable social roles and norms, or the desire to make sense of and simplify highly complex environments. These points of critique also resonate with the concerns raised by William Walters (2015) and Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke (2011) vis-à-vis governmentality studies that I discussed earlier: governmentality has become somewhat of a filter in some scholarly works, prompting their authors to search for homogeneous rationalities rather than remaining open for “unexpected, paradoxical, heterogeneous and perhaps unstable combinations of rationalities and techniques” (Walters 2015, 6). Drawing on new institutionalism facilitates greater openness in terms of analysis also because organisations are *a priori* understood as fragmented, following diverse rationalities, and not necessarily acting rationally. This perspective complicates the kind of governmentality approaches criticised by Bigo, Boswell, Walters, and Bröckling et al., as it questions the determining force of a single or limited set of rationalities within a given environment on organisational practices. In this thesis, rationalities, discursive formations, and techniques of government are understood as partly constituted by practices, while simultaneously informing and influencing these practices.

While new institutionalism can add important insights to the study of continuity and change in organisations, approaches in this field tend to undertheorise the organisational environment. Bringing together approaches from within critical security studies and organisational sociology thus enriches and benefits both strands of theory. A Foucauldian analysis of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security, as well as their circulation and interactions in the border regime today can provide important insights into the environment Frontex finds itself in, and the wider institutional myths that are dominant in it. Scott and Meyer remarked that “the most interesting and useful forms of institutional theory depend on showing the

collective and cultural character of the development of institutional environments” (Scott and Meyer 1994b, 4), which is what a Paris School approach can contribute to most meaningfully.

On the other hand, institutional analysis allows us to add a middle level to Bigo’s analysis of (in)securitisation, complementing his work on professional socialisation and professionals’ ‘social universes’ with the additional dimension of organisational dynamics, which influence the competitions and power struggles within the wider field of the border regime. Organisational identities, structures, and internal discrepancies influence the positioning of individual security agencies such as Frontex within their environment, in addition to the factors Bigo wrote about, such as professional groups’ dispositions, perceptions and beliefs. New institutionalism thus adds an additional layer of analysis to the accounts of Bigo and his colleagues, while their analyses add a more complex and well-developed conceptualisation of the environment to organisational sociology. Despite having distinctly different focuses, new institutionalism and a Paris School approach speak to each other, and complement one another meaningfully. By bringing together an in-depth analysis of the institutional environment and its wider discursive formations (including their structures, subject positions, and the power relations they invoke) on the one hand, with a nuanced analysis of organisational positioning vis-à-vis these wider discursive formations on the other hand, this thesis will offer timely insights into the growth of humanitarianism and human rights in the border regime, and the emergence of Frontex as a ‘civilising force’ promoting human rights, humanitarianism, as well as border security throughout EUrope.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the wider fields of study this thesis speaks to, and have introduced some of the debates it seeks to advance. Admittedly, the boundaries I drew between the various approaches – in particular the distinction between critical border and security studies, as well as the wider group of the Paris School – are partly

artificial, as a number of texts and authors might be seen as part of more than one of the discussed fields. They are, like this thesis, located at the intersection of different ‘Schools’ or approaches, and might be ordered and characterised differently by other authors.

Overall though, it is clear that both critical migration and border studies and critical security studies seek to intervene into traditionally prevailing approaches and conceptualisations within international relations and, more generally, social sciences. Opposing state-centric, naturalising, and static understandings of borders, mobility, and governance that have for a long time dominated research in these areas, they offer a different reading of processes of bordering, securitising, and governing. What I aimed to show in this chapter is that despite the important insights and contributions that these literatures have made, they tend to rely on a simplified view of organisations, which are often conceptualised as coherent, unitary actors. Given the importance of organisations and bureaucracies within the EUropean border regime, insights into intra-organisational dynamics from within new institutionalism can help to deepen analyses of continuity and change not only within individual organisations (such as Frontex), but also in the border regime more widely. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to bring critical border and security studies into conversation with organisational sociology, arguing that both sides could refine and enrich their analyses by drawing on the insights of the other. While new institutionalist analyses provide a more complex conceptualisation of internal organisational processes, motivations, identities, and goals, studies in critical security and border studies offer a nuanced and differentiated conceptualisation of a specific organisational environment, namely the EUropean border regime, and have shown that Foucauldian approaches can help theorise these environments also more generally.

Ultimately, both critical border and security studies seek to understand processes of exclusion and ‘othering’ by looking at how (and by whom) these are enacted, performed, and contested. Sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, authors in these fields simultaneously ask what alternative modes of governance might be, and how less violent and exclusionary futures might be made possible. In doing so, some among

them seem to implicitly present human rights and / or humanitarian discourses as the potentially better alternatives to securitisation. While such assumptions exist within accounts in the ‘Paris School’ (as shown above), they emerge most strongly from within the ‘Aberystwyth School’, which advocates an individual-centred approach to security. The increasing appropriation and co-optation of humanitarian and human rights discourses by a key security actor – Frontex – ought to be seen as a positive development from authors within this ‘School’, as a growing emphasis has been placed on the security threats faced by individuals on the move. Such a perspective, however, falls short on two counts: first, it fails to provide an analytical framework within which the shift towards humanitarianism and human rights can be understood. Second, it fails to analyse how this shift towards a focus on the ‘human’ has enabled new forms of government and exclusion. Accordingly, this thesis will draw on a ‘Paris School’ approach in order to examine how security, humanitarianism, and human rights are related both on a discursive level, and in the specific context of contemporary border governance in EUrope. In the next chapter, each discursive formation will be defined and connected to its wider context, while discursive similarities, differences, and tensions between them will be explored.

Chapter 2: Humanitarianism, Human Rights, and Security

In public debates as well as academic writings, security-centred approaches to migration are often opposed to ‘better’ alternatives, particularly human rights or humanitarian approaches. In a recent article, Tugba Basaran for instance problematized that a politics of unease raised “the cost of empathy toward securitized (unwelcome) populations, thus unsettling bonds of solidarity and humanity” (Basaran 2015, 215). Challenging this opposition between security and humanity, I aim to show in this chapter – and throughout the thesis – that security, humanitarianism, and human rights can and do feed into each other in the governance of EUropean external borders. Frequently, the increasing appropriation of humanitarian and human rights language by security actors such as Frontex is dismissed as a strategic act, viewed as being insincere and divorced from the ‘real’ practices on the ground. Following Nick Vaughan-Williams, I question this interpretation and argue that in the co-existence between these various discursive formations “there is more at stake [...] than merely a difference between the ‘rhetoric’ of humanitarian policies and the ‘reality’ of dehumanising practices” (Vaughan-Williams 2015a, 2). Not only does such an account overly simplify the complex relations between the three formations, it also simplifies the processes within Frontex as an organisation and its staff members as individuals, who – despite working as border guards – often want to be doing the ‘right’ thing, which for some of them includes meeting their humanitarian and / or human rights obligations (see Ioannides and Tondini 2010).

Most importantly, however, the ‘rhetoric’ vs. ‘reality’ argument fails to appreciate the intricate connections between humanitarianism, human rights, and security. In doing so, it risks resulting in a call for a better implementation of humanitarian and human rights rhetoric, rather than engaging more deeply and creatively with how the violence in EUropean borderlands might be critiqued most effectively. As Nick Vaughan-Williams notes, however, the

need to step back and search for alternative critical philosophical resources is increasingly pressing because many of the conventional grounds for critiquing border violence found in academic and non-academic literatures that focus on an abstract and idealised human subject - human rights, humanitarianism, and ‘migrant-centredness’ - have already been coopted by authorities complicit in that violence (Vaughan-Williams 2015a, 2).

This co-optation by Frontex is the focus of this thesis, and has been examined and reflected on in other contexts by a number of authors, mostly within the field of anthropology. Didier Fassin (2012) and Miriam Ticktin (2006, 2011) analysed the simultaneous governing of migration in France through security and humanitarianism. Michel Agier (2010, 30) conceptualised humanitarianism as the governance of ‘undesirables’ through spatial confinement among other strategies. Costas Douzinas (2007) and Wendy Brown (2004) on the other hand problematized the entanglement of human rights with liberal imperialism.

Beyond state actors’ appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights, existing analyses of the growing cooperation of NGOs and international organisations on the one hand, and border police, military, Frontex, and other security actors on the other hand deserve mentioning. The increasing presence of NGOs in EUropean border regions was described by Walters (2011) as the ‘humanitarianisation’ of EUropean borders, and was witnessed also by Ruben Andersson (2014) during his fieldwork at the Spanish-Moroccan borders. Far from being adversaries, (some) NGOs and international organisations collaborate in the governance of migration in a variety of different contexts, including search and rescue, the management of refugee camps, assisting people in transit, conducting ‘voluntary’ return programmes, overseeing deportations, etc. Regarding the implementation of search and rescue missions in Spain, Andersson writes of a ‘symbiosis’ between the Red Cross, the Guardia Civil, and journalists, who shared information, exchanged staff members, know-how, and resources, and helped each other with translations, interrogations, and the identification of ‘smugglers’.

What this chapter seeks to add to these accounts is a theoretical reflection on the similarities and differences between humanitarianism, human rights, and security as three independent yet closely related discursive formations. Exploring how

humanitarianism, human rights, and security relate to each other on a discursive level provides important insights into an analysis of their articulation in governing migration. To clarify the concepts at the heart of this thesis, this chapter will introduce each of the discursive formations in turn and briefly reflect on their respective histories. Subsequently, I will analyse the similarities, differences, and interrelations between humanitarianism, human rights, and security. In doing so, I will argue that the shared fundamentals of the three discursive formations have created the conditions of possibility for the appropriation of human rights and humanitarianism by state and security actors, and for the intertwining of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in contemporary EUropean border governance.

Three discursive formations

Drawing on Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*, this thesis uses the concept of discursive formation to think through the connections between humanitarianism, human rights, and security. While a full archaeology of these discursive formations is not possible within the constraints of this chapter, I will seek to draw on some of the routes of inquiry outlined by Foucault. Importantly, the exploration that follows "is not intended to reduce the diversity of discursive formations, and to outline the unity that must totalize them, but is intended to divide up their diversity into different figures" (Foucault 1972, 159–160). As outlined already, it does so by dividing the highly diverse terrain of EUropean border governance into three discursive formations: humanitarianism, human rights, and security. Following Foucault, the concept of discursive formation describes instances where

between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations) [...]. The conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected we shall call the rules of formation. The rules of formation are conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance) in a given discursive division (Foucault 1972, 38).

While being characterised by particular rules, discursive formations are dynamic and in constant historical flux, they are “forming formedness”: their principles of order are continuously overridden and ever changing (Angermuller 2014, 15). They neither have a definite origin nor a clearly defined end point they are striving towards. Moreover, discursive formations are composed of multiplicities of diverse elements that may be contradictory to one another (Foucault 1972, 200). This means, as Angermuller notes, that “an arbitrary moment inheres in every representation of discursive formation. No part can represent the whole since it cannot be clear where discursive formation starts and where it comes to an end” (Angermuller 2014, 16). When exploring the characteristics of and connections between humanitarianism, human rights, and security, it is thus important to emphasise that these discursive formations are highly diverse and dispersed rather than unified. Those drawing on the same discursive formation do not necessarily share the same reasoning or viewpoints, and might rely on different elements within it.

Security

Having introduced security and (in)securitisation in chapter 1, I will keep the discussion of these concepts short here. In this thesis, I draw primarily on sociological approaches within critical security studies, most importantly on the works of Didier Bigo, Jef Huysmans, and Claudia Aradau. As such, I understand security as a discursive formation and a technique of government that orders social relations, administering trust and fear between individuals and groups of people (Aradau 2008, 6; Huysmans 2006a, 53). In doing so, it produces an in-group, deemed to be in need of protection, and a threatening ‘other’ that is excluded and sought to be kept at a distance.

In his lectures on *Security, Territory and Populations*, Michel Foucault made a number of propositions about security, without however developing any of them in depth (Bigo 2008; Foucault 2009). Nevertheless, his initial thoughts stimulated a range of scholarly work that relies on a conceptualisation of security not as aimed at controlling or

disciplining individuals, but instead as closely related to liberty, normalisation, and the management of populations. According to Foucault, the security apparatus which emerged in the 18th century was “not so much establishing limits and frontiers, or fixing locations, as, above all and essentially, making possible, guaranteeing, and ensuring circulations: the circulation of people, merchandise, and air, etcetera” (Foucault 2009, 51). In this, security differs from discipline: it is not isolating, closing off, or centralising, but instead aimed at “constituting an ‘environment of life’ for populations, by opening, integrating and enlarging” (Bigo 2008, 97). Relying on the principle of freedom of circulation and of the protection of population life, security simultaneously implies the management of ‘risk’, based on calculations of probability and statistical distributions. Security is thus also the outcome of surveying statistical regularities, and deriving abnormalities. It produces categories and profiles, and is profoundly normalising. Those deemed ‘abnormal’ or ‘threatening’ are excluded, kept at a distance, or disposed of.

Within the critical security studies literature, there has been an interest in two different modes of enacting insecurities: one that invokes an existential threat to be combatted through urgent and exceptional measures that are conceptualised as distinct from ‘normal’ politics, and another one that focuses on a governmentality of risk that pervades everyday security practices and routines. The so-called Copenhagen School upholds the distinction between security as related to exceptionality and the logic of war on the one hand, and risk as a more mundane concept that does not invoke the same notion of threat, urgency, and survival on the other hand (Aradau, Lobo-Guerrero, and Van Munster 2008, 149). Building on this distinction, Olaf Corry (2012) suggests differentiating between both by using the terms ‘securitisation’ and ‘riskification’ respectively, arguing that the latter relates to “second-order security politics” focused on analysing the preconditions for danger or harm before they materialise (Corry 2012, 238). Karen Lund Peterson (2012) however cautions that simply using the concept ‘riskification’ to describe speech acts that invoke future risks instead of direct and imminent threats closes down enquiries into how security and related techniques change over time. The separation between security on the one hand

and risks on the other hand has moreover been challenged by analyses of the bureaucratic, routine constitution of security through practices, in which risk analysis and management have come to play an increasingly prominent role (Aradau, Lobo-Guerrero, and Van Munster 2008).

Rather than focusing on speech act analysis as Corry's proposal does, Jef Huysmans (2014) suggests differentiating between two different techniques of enacting insecurity, namely "exceptionalist securitising" and "diffuse securitising." Exceptionalist securitising intensifies challenges to the nation or political community by framing them as existential threats and invoking a conception of war, including the need to fight against an enemy. Importantly, in doing so it "also defines what counts as normal or democratic in the very act of identifying what is considered abnormal or non-democratic" (Huysmans 2014, 69). While concerned with 'exceptional' situations, this mode of securitising is not only concerned with inter-state matters of war and peace. Instead, it "often works the boundary between the normal democratic and the exceptional into intimate and everyday relations," such as crossing international borders, and thus has profound consequences on how individuals can live their daily lives (Huysmans 2014, 72).

Diffuse securitising, on the other hand, de-intensifies and scatters insecurities, including through the expansion of security technologies to areas not traditionally associated with security, such as migration, environmental protection, or development policy. Rather than invoking an existential threat or deadly enemy, diffuse securitisation is often related to analysing, preparing for, and managing uncertainties and risks: "[d]efining uncertainty as the 'new' security question and instituting practices of risk management have played a central role in this process of breaking down the instituted hierarchies and divisions of insecurity" (Huysmans 2014, 77). Diffuse securitising often works by making associations and drawing connections between different types of insecurities or risks, reconnecting diverse elements into a 'patchwork of insecurities'. In doing so, it does not simply describe realities, but brings a world of risks into being. A key technology of diffuse securitising, surveillance, "makes suspicion an organising principle of relating," and inscribes this suspicion on

particular bodies and actions (Huysmans 2014, 103).⁹ While diffuse securitising renders the boundaries of security ambiguous and contested, they do not disappear altogether: it allows security practices to extend to beyond previous boundaries, but not to be everywhere, all the time (Huysmans 2014, 88).

What is important to emphasise in the context of this thesis, however, is that both modes of securitising do not mutually exclude one another. Huysmans discusses this at the example of state borders: “[t]he exceptional status of the border becomes enacted not in terms of a routinised defence of the territory but the routines are deployed in and come to symbolise a fight against violent enemies that pose an existential threat to the polity” (Huysmans 2014, 61). While the practices of border control can mostly be described as diffuse securitising, they are often framed as part of exceptionalist security politics (Huysmans 2014, 181). The co-existence between both modes of securitising is also reflected in Frontex’s exceptionalist representations of particular events as ‘crises’ on the one hand, and its practices of information gathering, risk analysis, and surveillance that can be described as diffuse securitising on the other hand, as chapters 4 and 5 will show.

Related to Huysmans’ distinction between exceptionalist and diffuse securitising are two different modes of operation in political decision-making. Following Huysmans (2006a, 2014), as well as Neal (2009) and Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins (2014), I understand security as consisting both of political spectacles and technocratic processes, i.e. as being constituted by highly visibilised, public contests over framings and policies, as well as by much less publicised routines, bureaucratic processes, technologies, skills and knowledges that develop incrementally.

⁹ Huysmans’ theorisation of diffuse securitising is closely related to analyses of risk in critical security studies. The interest in risk analysis, calculation, and management within the wider security field has grown over the last 15 years (see e.g. Amoore 2006, 2009, 2014; Amoore and de Goede 2008a, 2008b; Aradau and van Munster 2007, 2008, 2012a, 2012b; de Goede and Randalls 2009; de Goede, Simon, and Hoijtink 2014; Neal 2009; van Munster 2009).

The notion of ‘humanity’

Contrary to this conceptualisation of security, the discursive formations of humanitarianism and human rights are based on the notion of ‘humanity’. Despite the seemingly universal appeal of this term, different groups of people were deemed to belong outside a notion of a shared humanity throughout history. At the time of the French revolution, women were excluded from the ‘universal’ rights outlined in the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” (Rancièrè 2004). And during colonialism, the colonised were violently excluded from humanity and actively dehumanised (Cornell 2014). Even today, we are seeing “varying degrees of humanity”, for instance in relation to the duty to rescue individuals at sea (Basaran 2015, 213). The concept of ‘humanity’ can thus be deeply exclusionary, and does not provide a stable normative foundation for policies and practices. In Douzinas’ words, it simultaneously “carries an enormous symbolic capital, a surplus of value and dignity [...]”. This symbolic excess turns the ‘human’ into a floating signifier, into something that combatants in political, social and legal struggles want to co-opt to their cause, and explains its importance for political campaigns” (Douzinas 2007, 55–56).

In the contemporary world, the notion of ‘humanity’ is frequently invoked in relation to humanitarian arguments or human rights claims. As the following discussions will show, there are remarkable similarities between the discursive formations of human rights and humanitarianism while at the same time, important differences between them persist. As Miriam Ticktin summarises,

in a broad sense, human rights institutions are largely grounded in law, constructed to further legal claims, responsibility, and accountability, whereas humanitarianism is more about the ethical and moral imperative to bring relief to those suffering and to save lives; here, the appeal to law remains opportunistic. Although both are clearly universalist discursive formations, they are based on different forms of action and, hence, often institute and protect different ideas of humanity (Ticktin 2006, 35; see also Barnett 2011, 16).

While both discursive formations have increasingly blurred over the last two decades, they have separate genealogies and trajectories, and “should not be conflated” (Barnett

2011, 17). In the following, both humanitarianism and human rights will be introduced in turn, before moving on to an examination of their relationships to security.

Humanitarianism

Humanitarian ideas have a long history in Europe, and have come to fundamentally structure common ways of thinking. While humanitarianism “is not one of a kind but rather has a diversity of meanings, principles, and practices”, the aim to relieve unnecessary suffering is shared across these different meanings and practices (Barnett 2011, 221). Didier Fassin defines humanitarianism as a moral discursive formation as well as a political resource that serves particular interests (Fassin 2010a, 239). Humanitarianism has, at its heart, an “unstable balance” between contradictory elements and characteristics (Barnett 2011, 8):

[o]n the one hand, moral sentiments are focused mainly on the poorest, most unfortunate, most vulnerable individuals: the politics of compassion is a politics of inequality. On the other hand, the condition of possibility of moral sentiments is generally the recognition of others as fellows: the politics of compassion is a politics of solidarity. This tension between inequality and solidarity, between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance, is constitutive of all humanitarian government (Fassin 2012, 3).

Here, it is important to note that the suffering of others causes both pain and pleasure: “we love to feel pity”, as Saint Augustine wrote already in the fourth century (Fassin 2012, 251). While humanitarianism invokes a universalising ethics, compelling us to feel sympathy and connection with strangers, it can also engender inequality: humanitarianism can serve both revolutionary and counterrevolutionary goals (Barnett 2011, 221).

Often, the emergence of humanitarianism is dated back to the abolitionist movements in the UK, France, and the US, while the foundation of the Red Cross movement by Henry Dunant in 1864 is seen as a pivotal moment in its institutionalisation (Barnett 2011; Fassin 2012; Ticktin 2011). Where exactly humanitarianism had its beginnings, however, is not self-evident: “[h]umanitarianism has a long and sometimes ambiguous history, largely because it is not easily defined” (Ticktin 2011, 69). In Douzinas’

words, “[h]umanitarianism started its career as a limited regulation of war but has now expanded and affects all aspects of culture and politics” (Douzinas 2007, 57). Michael Barnett (2011) divides the history of humanitarianism into three broad phases: Imperial Humanitarianism prevailed between 1800 and 1945; Neo-Humanitarianism between 1945 and 1989, and Liberal Humanitarianism since the end of the Cold War.

While compassion for the suffering of other human beings has existed for centuries, Barnett characterises the emergence of Imperial Humanitarianism as bearing three marks of distinction: “assistance beyond borders, a belief that such transnational action was related in some way to the transcendent, and the growing organization and governance of activities designed to protect and improve humanity” (Barnett 2011, 10). From the beginning, two different types of humanitarianism coexisted: “an emergency branch that focuses on symptoms, and an alchemical branch that adds the ambition of removing the root causes of suffering” (Barnett 2011, 10). Although emergency humanitarianism quickly became synonymous with what humanitarianism as a whole stood for, including through its success in creating and enacting international humanitarian law, branches of humanitarianism that looked at the roots of suffering and sought long-term changes existed throughout its history. Importantly, both types of humanitarianism were closely bound up with colonialism and racism, and the work of missionaries attempting to “civilise” or “humanise” the “savage peoples” (Barnett 2011, 82). While humanitarians were initially mostly driven by religion, towards the late 19th century references to a transcendent god began to be replaced by references to humanity as a whole.

As the Second World War ended and decolonialisation began in earnest, the shift from Imperial to Neo-Humanitarianism was characterised by a move towards professionalization, secularisation, and an increasing institutionalisation. As Barnett outlines, there were also changes in how the ‘beneficiaries’ of humanitarian practices were conceived:

[w]ith the missionaries losing ground to the development experts, humanitarians were [...] more sensitive to infantilizing language and discarded any hint that these people were “backward” or “child-like”, even though distinctions between “undeveloped” and “developed” retained evolutionary images in which the West would show the rest of the world its future. And, they used expert knowledge and utilized quasi-technocratic language to justify their interventions. Although these changes could suggest a more respectful approach, humanitarianism was still something done for and to others, not with them (Barnett 2011, 105).

In addition to the continued importance of paternalism in humanitarian thought and action, the charged political climate of the Cold War led humanitarians to actively attempt to appear depolitical, as well as to separate their work from more a politically charged human rights language. The foundation of Médecins Sans Frontières in 1971 was a key development for the “moralist antipolitics” of this era (Ticktin 2011, 73).

After the end of the Cold War, humanitarian thought and practice transformed once more. Its reach expanded, as “[h]umanitarianism was the only feasible direction for ‘the ethically serious European’ following the discrediting of both communism and developmentalism after 1989” (Edkins 2003, 254). In Didier Fassin’s words, “[a] new moral economy, centered on humanitarian reason, therefore came into being during the last decades of the twentieth century” (Fassin 2012, 7). Simultaneously, the proliferation of liberalism, and with it the belief that markets, democracy, and the rule of law were the universally applicable solution for all of humankind led to an intensification of previously existing trends: the cooperation between state actors and humanitarian organisations grew closer, the role of expertise in humanitarian work increased, new connections between development, human rights, and relief efforts were forged in response to ‘new wars’ and ‘complex emergencies’ (Barnett 2011; Ticktin 2011). In contrast to Neo-Humanitarianism, Liberal Humanitarianism expanded to root causes of suffering, and became more explicitly political in doing so (Barnett 2011, 167).

Indeed, a repositioning in relation to politics took place in the 1990s. During the Cold War, both branches of humanitarianism largely agreed on the necessity to remain apolitical, even though they interpreted this differently (with alchemic humanitarians including issues such as ‘development’ into their ‘apolitical’ stance). In contrast, the end of the Cold War and subsequent events led humanitarians to rethink their

relationship to politics, and their identity. Importantly, the emerging consensus was that “humanitarianism could and should engage in politics, if by politics it meant explicitly recognizing that the goals of justice, peace, and equality required changing politics as usual” (Barnett 2011, 195). While some organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, remained decidedly antipolitical, many other humanitarians increasingly embraced an engagement with politics. In the 1990s, the relationship between humanitarianism and the military began to change, too, and both became increasingly blurred: “whereas at the beginning of the decade aid agencies tried to recruit states for their cause, by the beginning of the next decade they discovered that states had already co-opted humanitarianism for their interests” (Barnett 2011, 172). Around the turn of the millennium, military forces came to view humanitarian and human rights actors not as opponents, but as constructive critics helping to make military violence more efficient (Weizman 2011, 117).

While many of the dilemmas humanitarians have faced in the last two decades were intensified by the developments after the end of the Cold War – including the tension between emergency relief and root causes, as well as the relationship between humanitarianism, governance, and politics – they are by no means new, and have often been present from the very beginnings of humanitarianism (Barnett 2011, 6). The last few decades, however, have further institutionalised humanitarianism, and firmly engrained humanitarian ideals in contemporary societies. Fassin argues that humanitarian arguments have become unquestionable, and the need to save lives and mitigate human suffering are commonly accepted ‘truths’: “[h]umanitarian reason is morally untouchable” (Fassin 2012, 244; see also Calhoun 2010; Fassin 2007b, 2010a, 2010b). This is echoed also by Michel Agier (2010; 2011a; 2011b), who refers to the present as the “age of humanitarianism”, in which dissensus to the idea of a shared, global humanity is stifled or dismissed. Humanitarianism circulates widely, and the media as well as politicians, NGOs, international organisations and activists refer to and build on it. Humanitarian arguments have also become more prominent in EUropean border governance in recent years (Andersson 2014; Apostolova-Englehart 2012; Aradau 2004b, 2008; Campesi 2014; Cuttitta 2010, 2014; Fassin and Pandolfi

2010; Horsti 2012; Pallister-Wilkins 2015; Tazzioli 2013; Ticktin 2006; Tsianos and Hess 2010; Vaughan-Williams 2015a; Walters 2011). In Fassin's words, "the distinctive feature of contemporary societies is without doubt the way that moral sentiments have become generalized as a frame of reference in political life" (Fassin 2012, 247).

Given the increasing importance of humanitarianism today, the following sections will discuss its characteristics in the contemporary world, particularly in relation to the governance of migration and borders. As a technique of government, humanitarianism is engaged with the management of the "undesirables of the world" both abroad and at home, in refugee camps, reception centres and detention facilities (Agier 2011b). Both Fassin (2010a, 244) and Agier (2011a) note that humanitarianism has the power to let live and to let die. They argue that the life that is either sacrificed or saved is what Giorgio Agamben refers to as 'bare' or 'sacred' life, i.e. mere biological existence without a social or political dimension to it (Agamben 1995, 133; Fassin 2010a, 244):

[h]umanitarianism occupies the whole space of life, including the political space: situations in which the victim and the guilty, the true refugee and the false refugee, the vulnerable and the undesirable occupy the whole representation of the person, and sound the end of the citizen who may say what he or she wants without condition (Agier 2011a, 202).

Humanitarianism reduces individuals to victims, simultaneously "stripping them of the very cultural, historical, and social processes that make them human and confer genuine dignity on them" (Barnett 2011, 228). 'Victims' are racialized as non-white, and are imagined as strangers: "not just people one happens not to know, but people paradigmatically distant" (Calhoun 2010, 33).

Moreover, 'victims' are rarely involved in the decision-making around humanitarian action. The professionalization of humanitarianism partially relies on a belief that human needs remain constant across diverse contexts and situations, which justifies the involvement of experts rather than affected populations in planning and implementing humanitarian practices. Expert involvement is presented as objective and impartial, but simultaneously keeps power concentrated among a small group of

select people: those who are in a position to choose to travel to foreign lands to ‘assist’ people ‘in need’ are mostly white, Western, and middle-class. Relying on expert knowledge and valuing ‘objective’ expertise over embodied, local experiences can further a paternalistic approach:

[h]umanitarianism is the desire to relieve the suffering of distant strangers. Paternalism is the act of interfering in the lives of others, often without their permission, on the grounds that such interventions are for their own good. Paternalism and humanitarianism are not twins, but the family resemblance is often uncanny. Humanitarians frequently act first and ask questions later – and at times, not at all (Barnett 2011, 233).

While not all humanitarianism is necessarily paternalistic, paternalism has featured strongly throughout its varied history, as shown above.

Claims to expert and moral authority, moreover, can conceal oppressive power relations and even brute force. According to Agier (2010, 2011b), humanitarianism can serve as an “instrument of control”. He denounces that often, humanitarian projects smooth over destruction and violence caused in the first instance by military interventions. Agier argues that humanitarianism acts as the “left hand of Empire”: “[t]here is a hand that strikes and a hand that heals” (Agier 2011a). He furthermore notes that the “management of undesirables” is becoming increasingly diversified, as categories and spaces associated with individuals multiply (see also Zetter 2007). This management relies on the combined forces of both humanitarianism and the police, which work together in limiting human mobility. “Humanitarian action thus increasingly finds itself, if not systematically ‘trapped’, at least included a priori in the control strategies of migratory flows of all kinds” (Agier 2011a, 33; see also Pallister-Wilkins 2015). Humanitarian interventions might channel people to specific places where help is provided, keeping them from moving further afield. As one example, Agier points out that humanitarian arguments were used to justify plans to control mobility beyond EUropean frontiers: during the 2011 political upheavals in North Africa, former French President Nicolas Sarkozy for instance proposed the creation of regional ‘humanitarian zones’ in order to stop migratory journeys (Agier 2011b).

Moreover, Didier Fassin notes that there are hierarchies of lives inherent in humanitarianism, which value the lives of those who intervene and those whom they assist, or of foreign and national employees, differently. He argues that these inequalities do not come from individual prejudices, but are structural aporias of humanitarianism. According to Fassin, they are grounded in the asymmetric risks for different groups of people, as well as differential relations of compassion vis-à-vis these groups (Fassin 2010a, 255). Due to the different valuation of lives in humanitarianism, Fassin distances his account somewhat from a Foucauldian, biopolitical perspective on the population in its entirety. On the contrary, however, Nick Vaughan-Williams argues that Fassin's understanding of humanitarianism fits with a Foucauldian conceptualisation of biopolitics once Foucault's analysis of racism is brought back in (Vaughan-Williams 2015b, 40–43). As discussed in chapter 1, Foucault saw racism – i.e. the distinction between 'worthy' and 'unworthy' lives, which allowed for actively killing and 'letting die' some parts of the population – as central to biopolitics. Following Fassin's analysis, a similar discrimination and differential valuation of lives can be discerned in humanitarianism, which functions as a biopolitical technique of government.

Human Rights

Related to humanitarianism but nevertheless distinct from it, the discursive formation of human rights similarly enjoys almost universal approval today (Moyn 2010, 15). As Douzinas notes,

[h]uman rights appear to have triumphed in the world. They unite left and right, the pulpit and the state, the minister and the rebel, the North and the South. Human rights are the fate of our societies, the ideology after 'the end of ideologies', the only values left in a valueless world after 'the end of history' (Douzinas 2007, 177–178).

Also in the EUropean border regime, human rights feature prominently. They are not only advanced by the 'usual suspects' such as Amnesty International and Human

Rights Watch: importantly, also “EU officials speak fluently in the language of human rights with regular references to fair treatment, due process, and personal dignity” (G. Feldman 2012, 83). Lending legitimacy to the policies and practices to govern migration, human rights are mobilised by EUropean institutions, member state politicians, and not least Frontex. They are, like humanitarianism and security, a technique of government. Human rights organise political space, frequently aiming to monopolise it (Brown 2004, 461). “[T]hey are one way through which the effects of power are distributed across the social body” (Douzinas 2007, 101). Gearty sees parts of the success of human rights in the space they leave for interpretation and idealism, making them adaptable to diverse contexts and societies (Gearty 2014, 38); while Brown emphasises their “neat fit” with and legitimisation of liberal imperialism and global free trade (Brown 2004, 461).

The wide circulation of human rights points to a fundamental ambiguity at the heart of the politics of human rights: “it involves [...] the insurrectional movements linked with the invention of democracy, but also the instrumental uses of the idea of human rights to legitimize the status quo and strategies of domination” (Balibar 2013, 20; see also Douzinas 2007; Kennedy 2002). Human rights can thus both conceal and legitimise dominant structures, and at the same time also be used as a tool to expose inequalities:

rights are not just defenses against social and political power but are, as an aspect of governmentality, a crucial aspect of power’s aperture. As such, they are not simply rules and defenses against power, but can themselves be tactics and vehicles of governance and domination (Brown 2004, 459; see also Wall 2014, 107).

In an insightful overview of some of the main debates and critiques of human rights, Douzinas and Gearty draw on Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari in arguing that rights cannot be understood as a-historical or a-cultural, but are always embedded in power relations (Douzinas and Gearty 2014, 8). Moyn (2010) showed that contrary to common assumptions, human rights have been intimately tied up with states and sovereignty from the beginning. Since the French revolution, states were seen as being best suited to guarantee these rights to their citizens. Asad remarked that also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) almost immediately invoked an individual’s belonging to a country or territory, emphasising that “the universal

character of the rights-bearing person is made the responsibility of sovereign states, each of which has jurisdiction over a limited group within the human family” (Asad 2000, para. 13). In her famous and related critique, Hannah Arendt (1967) argued that rights were deeply implicated with state power and citizenship. They effectively broke down when individuals were stripped of their national and citizen rights during Nazism, and those without a home and political status found themselves expelled from humanity altogether: “[t]he world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human” (Arendt 1967, 299). While the international human rights system thus limits the authority of states over their citizens, it also reinforces state power – up until today, a large part of human rights activism and legal work is primarily addressed to states (Merry 2006, 5; see also Salter 2012, 750). As Mutua phrased it, “[t]he state is the guarantor of human rights; it is also the target and *raison d’être* of human rights law” (Mutua 2001, 203).

Despite these clear political entanglements of human rights, activism in this field tends to present itself

as something of an antipolitics—a pure defense of the innocent and the powerless against power, a pure defense of the individual against immense and potentially cruel or despotic machineries of culture, state, war, ethnic conflict, tribalism, patriarchy, and other mobilizations or instantiations of collective power against individuals. More precisely, human rights take their shape as a moral discursive formation centered on pain and suffering rather than political discursive formation of comprehensive justice (Brown 2004, 453).

This self-representation is linked to the specific history of contemporary human rights, which Moyn argues could only become this successful globally by being precisely that: a minimalist, legalistic anti-politics. Rather than grounding human rights in an ancient history reaching back to notions of natural or God-given rights, Moyn (2007) argues that any such attempt “distorts the past to suit the present”. While contemporary connotations of human rights “[draw] on prior languages and practices the way a chemical reaction depends on having various elements around from different sources”, Moyn (2007) cautions against a linear reading of the concept’s history. He emphasises that there are major differences in how rights were conceptualised during the French revolution, for instance, and how they are conceptualised today. Linking both risks

failing to recognise the specificities of each (Moyn 2010, 25). Even the incorporation of human rights in international treaties and the United Nations should not be connected uncritically to the contemporary discursive formation of human rights, which Moyn argues has rather different connotations. In the 1940s, human rights featured only marginally in discussions around a new, global order. Moreover, the concept failed to ‘take off’ in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War because it failed to provide a solution to the most pressing dilemma of the time: whether human wellbeing was better attainable under communism or social democracy. Only in the 1970s did the term ‘human rights’ enter common parlance and transcend merely legalistic uses, following its growing mobilisation among dissident movements in communist countries. At that stage, other utopian visions had failed, and human rights as a minimalist ‘anti-politics’ could lead a way out of this impasse (Moyn 2010).

By framing struggles in terms of individual rights instead of political structures, human rights conceal deeper issues around the roots of conflict and injustices, and focus on small improvements for particular individuals or groups rather than the more fundamental and large-scale questioning of exploitative structures or political systems (Douzinas 2007, 109–110). As such, “[h]uman rights remedies, even when successful, treat the symptoms rather than the illness, and this allows the illness not only to fester, but to seem like health itself. [...] this may, in some contexts, place the human rights movement in the uncomfortable position of legitimating more injustice than it eliminates” (Kennedy 2002, 118 & 119). Notably, this legalistic, anti-political approach with its focus on the individual and the importance of jurisprudence emerged within a specifically Western context (Mutua 1995, 489). Similarly, a recent shift towards a more programmatic, comprehensive approach to human rights – which coexists with a more minimalist, rights-based interpretation – can be situated in the West. As Moyn (2010) notes, human rights are now frequently bound up with notions of democracy, good governance, and liberalism (see also Brown 2004, 455).

At the same time, human rights have marginalised other forms of critique in recent decades: “[h]uman rights ideas displace alternative visions of social justice that are

less individualistic and more focused on communities and responsibilities, possibly contributing to the cultural homogenization of local communities” (Merry 2006, 4; see also Kennedy 2002, 108). This has furthered critiques of what some might frame as an imperialist stroke of contemporary human rights, in which visions of a ‘better’ society and political system are sought to be actively spread around the world (see e.g. Asad 2000; Mutua 2001). As justifications of recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq showed, rights have become an instrument of particularly Western states to spread ‘universal values’, such as liberalism and good governance across the world (Brown 2004, 460; Mutua 2001, 223). As such, human rights “are part of the cultural package of the West, complete with an idiom of expression, a system of government, and certain basic assumptions about the individual and his relationship to society” (Mutua 2001, 237). Where states fail to adhere to particular standards, they are deemed less ‘civilised’ at best, and at worst perceived as a case for liberal intervention (Anghie 2006, 745). The spread of this “cultural package”, then, has not had (only) positive effects. As Michael Ignatieff, a defender of human rights and liberalism, acknowledges: “the impact of this shift [towards human rights as a moral imperium] has not necessarily been to the benefit of oppressed individuals, but rather to the benefit of the states which intervene in other states in the name of human rights” (Ignatieff, cited in Mutua 2007, 610, footnote 215; see also Douzinas 2007, 33).

Like security and humanitarianism, human rights also produce particular subject positions in need of specific forms of protection. As the discursive formation presents itself primarily in moral rather than political terms, it tends to focus on the relief of pain and suffering rather than on ideals of comprehensive justice (Brown 2004). In doing so, it divides humanity into distinct parts. Similarly to humanitarianism, human rights produce victims and rescuers, who depend on each other: rescuers exist only if there are victims, and victims need to be recognised as such by a rescuer (Douzinas 2007, 68). Importantly, however, human rights also produce perpetrators, who are deemed as evil and degenerate. Accordingly, “[t]he grand narrative of human rights contains a subtext that depicts an epochal contest pitting savages, on the one hand, against victims and saviors, on the other” (Mutua 2001, 201). The focus on perpetrators

is somewhat different from humanitarianism, which primarily emphasises the undeserved suffering of victims and their heroic saviours. In a further difference, human rights focus specifically on regulating the relationships between states and their citizens. Human rights focus on the entitlements and rights of victims, and might thus be viewed as potentially more emancipatory than humanitarianism: “[d]uties are owed to the other person, whereas charity can be weighed against other considerations, such as the seriousness of the situation and questions of convenience or financial results, and is open for individual utilitarian calculations” (Basaran 2015, 213; see also Barry 1982). Nevertheless, due to their specific codification in law, human rights are generally understood as principles that need to be balanced against one another, and can be limited or restricted to maintain e.g. national security, or the human rights of others (Douzinas 2007, 60). Humanitarianism on the other hand does not have these in-built limitations.

While they have different emphases and histories, humanitarianism and human rights tend to blur in contemporary practice, with rights-focused NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International working on humanitarian topics, such as appealing for search and rescue measures in the Mediterranean Sea; and humanitarian NGOs such as the Red Cross movement calling for respect for fundamental rights (Amnesty International 2014a; Human Rights Watch 2012a; ICRC 2015). Given some of the key similarities between the two discursive formations, this is not necessarily surprising: both are centred on the notion of a common humanity, focus on limiting unnecessary human suffering, and at the same time perpetuate hierarchies of suffering (by for instance legitimising military interventions). Having introduced each of the three discursive formations at the centre of this thesis individually in this section, I will now move on to a discussion of their relationship, looking at similarities and points of tension between them.

Interconnections between humanitarianism, human rights, and security

Entanglements in practice

When looking at some of the developments in the EUropean border regime over the last decade, the close relationships between all three discursive formations become visible. As noted before, the EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), adopted in May 2012, features language commonly associated with securitisation, as well as “a strong humanitarian concern expressed for the lives and well-being of ‘irregular’ migrants precisely as humans with the same fundamental rights as EUropean citizens” (Vaughan-Williams 2015a, 3). This double concern is also reiterated in a number of other EUropean policy documents, including the regulation of the European Border Surveillance System EUROSUR (European Commission 2011b). In this section, the entanglement of humanitarian, human rights, and security in contemporary border and migration practices will be discussed. Subsequently, I will turn to an analysis of their discursive similarities.

In terms of practices, Paolo Cuttitta (2013, 2014) showed how humanitarianism and security reinforced one another at the example of Lampedusa. By failing to transfer new arrivals from the little island to the Italian mainland and even closing down the local reception centre, the Italian government constructed humanitarian emergencies in Lampedusa at will. Images of ‘masses’ sleeping rough, and concern about the inability of the island to deal with arrivals that at times outnumbered the resident population were then mobilised to justify further security measures to prevent irregular migration, such as push-back operations in the Mediterranean Sea. Restrictive and security-focused practices were thus advanced by creating and capitalising on what was widely perceived to be a humanitarian emergency. The example of Lampedusa is not an exception: in the wake of the Cap Anamur case¹⁰ in 2004, the German and

¹⁰ The Cap Anamur was a ship owned by a German NGO with the same name. In 2004, the ship’s crew rescued 37 migrants in distress at sea close to Italian waters. The Italian government refused the boat entry into Italian territorial waters, and a nearly two-week standoff between the Italian coastguard and the Cap Anamur ensued. Eventually, the boat disembarked in Sicily, where most of those who had been rescued were deported immediately. The ship’s

Italian Ministers of the Interior Schily and Pisanu mobilised humanitarian arguments to promote the creation of extraterritorial camps for asylum seekers, claiming these would stop migrant deaths at sea (Hess and Tsianos 2007; Klepp 2010a). Similarly, deaths in Ceuta and Melilla in 2005 and arrivals of wooden boats in the Canary Islands in 2006 were used to articulate a sense of humanitarian concern: again, “the narrative of the new humanitarianism was used, which demands the prevention of migration to avoid human tragedies” (Hess and Tsianos 2007, 34–35, my translation).

Such a framing is however deeply problematic: it “shadows the fact that the targeted persons are not only bodies to be saved, but subjects of rights” (Jeandesboz 2011, 123). Moreover, it does not take threats individuals might face in origin or transit countries into account, as well as failing to problematize the EUropean visa regime and border controls that create the need for smuggling services in the first place. It seems bizarre to justify forcibly preventing people from leaving North and West African shores by claiming that this would save their lives; especially when it is known that among them are people fleeing violence and persecution. Nevertheless, humanitarian arguments have become one of the main justifications for externalising border controls (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015, 74).

As discussed in chapter 1, Bigo (2002a) and Cuttitta (2014) contend that humanitarianism is a by-product of securitisation. Contrary to them, I argue that humanitarianism and human rights ought to be taken seriously as independent discursive formations. Most importantly, humanitarianism and human rights should not be dismissed as mere strategies aiming to advance or conceal security actors’ objectives. Such an instrumentalist perspective not only fails to do justice to the multiplicity of actors involved in mobilising these discursive formations, it also presupposes a singular, overarching rationality that drives processes in the border regime. As discussed above, humanitarianism and human rights can be used to conceal or to expose injustices and oppression: politicians and security actors rely on humanitarianism and human rights as much as activists, NGOs, and unauthorised

captain and two crew members were charged with assistance to illegal immigration. They were acquitted in 2009 (Baldaccini 2010; Hans 2009).

border-crossers themselves. Reporting from their research on Lesbos, Tsianos, Hess, and Karakayali note that “[b]oth the migrants in the camp, as well as the critics in the metropolises, rely on a human rights discursive formation that seems at present to be the only vehicle capable of articulating migrants’ interests” (Tsianos, Hess, and Karakayali 2009, 7; see also Tsianos and Karakayali 2010, 383). Humanitarian and human rights language is mobilised in opposition to securitising practices as much as justification for them – its relation to security is more complex than merely instrumentalist accounts would be able to grasp.

Discursive similarities

Instead, what I propose in this thesis is that there are crucial commonalities across all three discursive formations, which create the conditions of possibility for the appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights by state and security actors. The following observations are focused on the particular articulation of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in the contemporary governance of EUropean borders: “[i]n archaeological analysis comparison is always limited and regional. Far from wishing to reveal general forms, archaeology tries to outline particular configurations” (Foucault 1972, 157). While it does not offer a full Foucauldian archaeology, this section examines the proximities of the three discursive formations in relation to the subjectivities and techniques of government they produce, as well as their relationship to sovereign power, neo-imperialism, and politics. Despite being only a partial analysis of their discursive relations, the following discussion provides insights into the preconditions for the intertwining of humanitarianism, human rights, and security formations with each other, and for the appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights by the security actor Frontex.

First of all, proximity across the discursive formations can be found in relation to the subject positions they produce. While using different concepts, it is notable that each formation produces a migrant ‘other’. Security others in a variety of ways, positing particular groups as ‘illegals’, ‘terrorists’, ‘criminals’, ‘welfare scroungers’, ‘risky subjects’, ‘bogus asylum seekers’, ‘carriers of diseases’, or of questionable morality,

and opposing ‘them’ to a homogenised ‘us’ to be protected. While being based on the ideal of a common humanity, humanitarianism on the other hand relies on the construction of subjects as ‘victims’ versus ‘saviours’, in which the former are debased, pitied, and looked down upon. Similarly, also human rights construct victims, perpetrators, and saviours. Victims are faceless, nameless, and defined by their deficiencies, dependency and needs (Agier 2010, 2011a; Douzinas 2007).

[E]very human rights campaign or humanitarian intervention presupposes an element of contempt for the situation and the victims. Human rights are part of an attitude of the postcolonial world in which the ‘misery’ of Africa is the result of its failings and corruption, its traditional attitudes and lack of modernisation, its nepotism and inefficiency, in a word of its sub-humanity (Douzinas 2007, 70).

Both the figure of the ‘illegal’ in the discursive formation of security and that of the ‘victim’ in humanitarianism and human rights are “incompatible with those of the subject and the citizen”, and the transition between the former two is frequent and random (Agier 2011a, 215; see also Andersson 2014, 280). Both are racialised categories, imagined as non-white and non-Western (Douzinas 2007, 85; Mutua 2001, 207). Jenny Edkins argued that this differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – which all three discursive formations share – “is the reason [...] why an increase in talk of normative criteria and the moral basis of humanitarianism is accompanied so closely by the incorporation of the independent humanitarian movement in practices of governance” (Edkins 2003, 255).

It is the white, Western citizen which figures in all three discursive formations as implicit ‘us’. In humanitarianism and human rights, the citizen becomes the saviour, affirming their own humanity by ‘helping’ others. Importantly, the relationship between saviours and victims is a hierarchical one: “[w]e do not like these others, but we love pitying them. They, the savages/victims, make us civilised” (Douzinas 2007, 70). It is this pity that is at times mobilised by activists in an effort to counter the portrayal of migrants as dangerous others and security threats. Not only is pity hierarchical, however, it also fails to fundamentally challenge existing categorisations (Aradau 2008, 35; Douzinas 2007, 97). As Claudia Aradau (2008) shows at the

example of trafficked women, invoking them as specifically pitiable victims indirectly reinforces the categorisation of other people on the move and prostitutes as delinquent subjects, given the construction of trafficked women as different from these groups (see also Ratfisch and Scheel 2010). At the same time, victims of trafficking themselves continue to be subjected to disciplinary techniques, have to follow particular rehabilitation programmes, and are often still ultimately returned to their home countries.

Secondly, all three discursive formations can be said to produce and reinforce sovereign power. The discursive formation of security tends to take the state or the nation as its referent object, focusing on the threat people on the move allegedly pose to them. As Lene Hansen pointed out, “[t]hreats and insecurities are not just potentially undermining of the state and things that could be eliminated, they constitute the state: the state only knows who and what it is through its juxtaposition against the radical, threatening Other” (L. Hansen 2006, 30). In Giorgio Agamben’s (1995) analysis, sovereignty has its origin in the production of bare life, which it simultaneously includes and excludes. Sovereign power decides over the life and death of its subjects. Humanitarianism focuses on those who are deemed to constitute bare life, and appeals for pity and assistance on their behalf. It does not fundamentally question their exclusion, but instead perpetuates their ‘othering’ further:

[i]n the same way that sovereign power produces the bare life it needs to sustain itself, humanitarianism renders people into needy victims, lives to be saved taken outside of the workings of normal juridical–political order, in such a way that justifies flouting norms of territorial integrity and ‘intervening’ in the affairs of another sovereign state (Vaughan-Williams 2009a, 134–135; see also Edkins 2003).

Also human rights have from their very beginning been bound up with exclusions, and qualifications of who was (not) viewed as ‘human’. Examining the history of international declarations, Douzinas finds that “[h]uman rights and national sovereignty – the two antithetical principles of international law – were born together, their contradiction more apparent than real” (Douzinas 2007, 98; see also Edkins 2000, 18). When appealing to the state as the principal guarantor for human rights, state

responsibility and power are further strengthened and legitimised. Consequentially, Douzinas describes human rights and sovereignty as “two sides of the same coin” (Douzinas 2007, 178). By focusing on expanding human rights to particular categories of people, their lives become incorporated into the field of bio-sovereignty, further strengthening it:

the spaces, the liberties, and the rights won by individuals in their conflicts with central powers always simultaneously prepared a tacit but increasing inscription of individuals’ lives within the state order, thus offering a new and more dreadful foundation for the very sovereign power from which they wanted to liberate themselves (Agamben 1995, 121).

In sum, security, humanitarianism, and human rights produce and depend on those who are ruled, those who rule, and those who are excluded (Edkins 2003, 256). Rather than challenging sovereignty, the discursive formations of humanitarianism and human rights tend to reinforce it (Caldwell 2004, 6).

When exploring the techniques of government tied up with each of the formations, further proximities emerge. Security is concerned with governing populations through biopolitical and disciplinary means, including the use of databases to establish ‘risk profiles’ of entrants, the filtering of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ border-crossers, and the use of detention and deportation against ‘undesirables’, who are confined to or removed from particular spaces. Human rights on the other hand are intimately bound up with liberal ideas about self-expression, individualism, and the rule of law, and function both as biopolitical and disciplinary techniques of power (Douzinas 2007). In relation to the government of people on the move, the formation of human rights also often entails an element of spatial confinement, or government of people in space. This occurs at the very least while the determination of categories of protection and rights takes place, but also in relation to particular categories of people – such as unaccompanied minors – who are assigned to particular spaces over longer periods of time.

A further example for this type of spatial governance is the Dublin Regulation, which facilitates the confinement and at times deportation of people on the move to the first

EU country they enter for the purposes of initially determining and subsequently accessing their rights. Lastly, humanitarianism has been described as the “management of undesirables” (Agier 2011a) and a “form of policing” (Agier 2010) that governs populations in ways at times not dissimilar to security, often through spatial confinements in camps. Makaremi (2009) coined the term “humanitarian confinement” in relation to France’s government of asylum seekers and irregular arrivals, referring to the spatial practice of confining victims/threats in so-called ‘international zones’ at airports. As Walters notes, “[t]his paradoxical term effectively captures the ambivalence of a policy that engages its target population as simultaneously vulnerable and criminalized” (Walters 2015, 7). All three discursive formations thus rely on disciplinary and biopolitical techniques to govern populations, centrally including the government of people in space.

Fourthly, humanitarianism, human rights, and security can all be argued to include neo-imperialist ambitions. Striving for ‘pre-emptive’ security (de Goede, Simon, and Hoijtink 2014), ‘buffer zones’ are being created outside of the EUropean borders, extraterritorialising security, border controls, and sometimes deaths to third states (Zaiotti 2009). Human rights have been used to justify wars and interventions, as well as to ‘other’ particular communities – e.g. Muslims for their alleged lack of respect for women’s or gay rights – both at home and abroad (Douzinas 2007). They carry assumptions about ‘civilised’ and ‘backwards’ societies within them, which are intricately bound up with ideas of racial inferiority (Merry 2006, 226). Merry adds to this that the human rights system is shaped by deep inequalities in power and resources between the global North and the global South. While human rights cannot be said to constitute a coercive or consistent legal system, they have emerged as a powerful discursive formation that transports ideas about ‘civility’, ‘good governance’, and liberalism across national boundaries: “the globalization of human rights fits a historical pattern in which all high morality comes from the West as a civilizing agent against lower forms of civilization in the rest of the world” (Mutua 2001, 210). Indeed, both human rights and humanitarian arguments have been used to justify military interventions by Western states over the last two decades. As Kennedy asserts, “[t]he

human rights vocabulary promises Western constituencies a politics-neutral and universalist mode of emancipatory intervention elsewhere in the world” (Kennedy 2002, 117). Donnelly refers to ‘imperial humanitarianism’ to capture the problematique of military interventions justified in humanitarian terms (Donnelly 2007, 298), and Balibar similarly notes that “‘humanitarian right’ turns out to be intimately combined with imperialist strategies for policing the world” (Balibar 2013, 19).

Lastly, humanitarianism, human rights, and security discursive formations can be seen as antipolitics which simplify the issues they are concerned with, portraying suggested actions as the only viable option to ensure security, or to reduce suffering and injustice. As Douzinas notes, humanitarianism tends to mask the complexities of reality, and focuses on the immediate relief of suffering:

[u]nited in our pity, we call for soothing interventions and care little for the pre- or post-intervention situation as long as they reduce the amount of pain. As a result, the complexity of history, the thick political context and the plurality of possible responses to each new ‘humanitarian tragedy’ is lost (Douzinas 2007, 82).

Reactions to human rights violations are of similar urgency and simplicity, whereas exceptionalist securitising focuses on combating what is framed as an existential threat, rather than addressing the underlying factors that lead to the emergence of such ‘threats’ in the first place. Simplifying complex issues, humanitarianism, human rights, and exceptionalist securitising all tend to naturalise proposed policy options, portraying them as the only choice.

Despite apparent differences, the discursive formations of security, humanitarianism, and human rights thus share a number of important commonalities. The similarities and connections across the three discursive formations have created the prerequisites for their contemporaneous articulation in a wider interdiscourse¹¹ of migration control

¹¹ The concept interdiscourse is taken from Michel Pêcheux’s (1982) work and refers to a complex of related discursive formations, the meanings of which are partially determined by their relationships with each other (see also Fairclough 1992).

in contemporary EUropean border governance in which they have, at times, become almost exchangeable. Similarities across the discursive formations have allowed for the appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights by state and security actors, as doing so does not fundamentally challenge the assumptions under which they exist and operate. Their entanglement has further allowed for frequent transitions between the discursive formations, at times barely noticeable: a humanitarian ‘crisis’ can be responded to with security ‘solutions’; a human rights deficit in a given place might justify the intervention of a security agency. Invoking one of the formations in the ambivalent field of border governance might produce effects within the others, due to the close connections they share.

At the same time, the specific relations that humanitarianism, human rights, and security have with one another do not erode their existence as distinct discursive formations: as the first part of this chapter showed, differences between them persist. What this discussion sought to show, however, is that in seeking to understand the rise of humanitarian and human rights rhetoric among state and security actors, it is important to take the close connections these three discursive formations have come to share over time into account.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the three discursive formations that are at the centre of this thesis, and situated them in their historical context. Subsequently, I explored how humanitarianism, human rights, and security are related to one another. In particular, I argued that each of the discursive formations ‘others’ people on the move, constructing them as victims, smugglers, or ‘illegals’ respectively; each produces and reinforces sovereign power; each works as technique of power, has neo-imperialist ambitions, and simplifies and decontextualizes issues to provide easy solutions. In highlighting these similarities, I sought to destabilise both common assumptions about the opposition of the discursive formations to each other, and instrumentalist accounts of the appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights by state and security actors.

Similarities between the three discursive formations need to be taken seriously, as they help explain why humanitarianism and human rights have failed to pose a fundamental challenge to security policies in recent years. In conclusion, I argue that discursive commonalities between the three formations constitute the preconditions for their increasing entanglement in EUropean border governance, and the appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights by state and security actors. As the following chapters will show, the similarities between the discursive formations have allowed Frontex to increasingly portray itself as a saviour of ‘migrant victims’, as doing so does not entail the need to question the fundamentals of contemporaneously existing security discursive formations: Frontex has simultaneously been able to uphold its identity as a protector of EUropean citizens from ‘migrant threats’.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

Having situated this thesis in the wider literature of critical border and security studies, and having outlined some of the conceptual reflections on humanitarianism, human rights, and security that are central to this thesis, this chapter will introduce the methodological assumptions my work is based on and the methods I used. As such, it will serve as guidance for chapters 4, 5, and 6, which will present the empirical findings of my research. After an initial discussion on the relevance and role of methods and methodology in international relations, and within critical research in this area, I will explain why I chose to study Frontex as an example of the articulation of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in the EUropean border regime. Subsequently, I will introduce the methods I used to study Frontex, drawing on the concepts of experimentation and *bricolage*. Lastly, I will provide a number of reflections on this thesis and the research process, pertaining to my positionality and personal motivations, issues of access and negotiations within the security field, and some of the limitations I see and acknowledge in this present work.

Critical research, methods and methodology

As pointed out before, I situate myself within the critical traditions of migration, border, and security studies. Accordingly, I ascribe to different understandings of ontology, epistemology, and the role of research in society than those most commonly adhered to in political science. Rejecting positivist notions of value-free, objective research, critical researchers also challenge the problem-solving, empiricist approach of the positivist paradigm, and instead question common assumptions, norms, and givens in today's world (Guillaume 2013; Law and Urry 2004; E. Newman 2010). This debate has real consequences: uncritical research into border controls risks generating knowledge that might contribute to tougher enforcement and increased exclusion, siding - while maintaining a supposedly neutral approach - ultimately with the more powerful (Düvell, Triandafyllidou, and Vollmer 2009). This speaks to what

some have problematized within social sciences more generally: the inability to carry out ‘bias-free’ research, as the choice is between uncritically accepting and legitimising the status quo, or questioning and changing it (see Becker 1967; Gouldner 1973; Mies 1992).

As an illustration of this, Bigo cautioned against the common use of administrative labels as analytical concepts in research, including human trafficking, refugees vs. migrants, and national security: “[w]hen these labels are used by academics as categories of understanding, the state is articulated through these authors more than they have a capacity to think about the state” (Bigo 2011, 230–231). Governmental categories are reinforced and legitimised in such approaches. Beyond the use of specific concepts, other authors have problematized the prevalence of “national paradigms” or a “container model of society” in much of migration research, which relies on and simultaneously reinforces the nation-state (Bommes and Thränhardt 2012; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). While critical scholarship seeks to probe, question, or challenge common labels and practices, it does not always escape from this form of “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

Drawing out commonalities among critical approaches, Salter (2013b) formulated four postures of critical inquiry. He identified a shared conviction that social and political realities are messy and defy ascriptions of single, unifying principles, and that agency is everywhere, including in individuals, groups, ideas, and objects. He furthermore argued that critical inquiry understands causality as emergent: “analyses set out the conditions of possibility for a set of politics, identities, or policies, rather than a single or complex source” (Salter 2013b, 2). Lastly, Salter reiterated the point already raised above, which is that all research, writing, and other forms of engagement are inherently political: “we understand politics in its broadest sense to mean questions concerning justice, power, and authority; critical scholarship means an active engagement with the world” (Salter 2013b, 2).

For some years, there was a scarcity of literature discussing what such a positioning might mean in terms of methods. In part, this might have been due to the fact that methods were often criticised for being disciplining or hygienising (Aradau and

Huysmans 2013, 2). More recently, however, there has been a renewed interest in questions of methods in critical research, as publications by Hansen (2006), Aradau and Huysmans (2013), and two edited books on this topic illustrate (Aradau, Huysmans, et al. 2015a; Salter and Mutlu 2013). These most recent engagements with methods have distanced themselves from the disciplining and constraining canon of research methods as it is frequently taught to students in the social sciences. Instead, the authors contend that “method and methodological reflections can be a key site of revisiting critique and politics in IR research” (Aradau and Huysmans 2013, 3). In doing so, they make a number of moves that challenge ‘traditional’ conceptions of methods.

First, they position themselves against dividing and hierarchically arranging methodology and methods as it is commonly done, with theory as coming first, followed by methodology and finally methods (Aradau, Huysmans, et al. 2015b; Aradau and Huysmans 2013). Instead, they propose conceptualising – and problematizing – method as practice: “[m]ethods are a practice of and within power relations; they exercise power and are inscribed by power relations” (Aradau, Huysmans, et al. 2015b, 11). As such, the authors also emphasise the performative and political character of methods, which are understood not merely as describing worlds, but as creating them in continuously changing ways. Social realities, identities, categories, and objects are made and re-made through methods, which act within and upon social and security worlds (Aradau and Huysmans 2013; Aradau, Huysmans, et al. 2015b; Law 2004; Law and Urry 2004). Following such a conceptualisation, researchers need to make choices pertaining to the kinds of worlds they want to enact when selecting and employing methods. Given that their methods interfere with and have effects on the world, they are inevitably political: “[t]here is no innocence” (Law and Urry 2004, 404; see also Law 2004). Disengagement becomes impossible, and the question remains instead one of *how* to engage with the world. Law and Urry argue that dominant methods in the social sciences mirror their historical legacy, particularly a 19th century focus on fixing, demarcating and categorising a world “out there” (Law and Urry 2004, 403).

Proposing a more ‘contemporary’ and critical approach to methods, Aradau and Huysmans suggest conceptualising them as devices and acts. As devices, methods are “probing and messy rather than logically and procedurally strict”, an understanding that “changes the principles guiding scientific research from rigour and systematicity to experimentation and *bricolage*” (Aradau and Huysmans 2013, 12). Not only is this according to the authors in line with much of scientific practice, which merely tends to be presented as impeccably logical and systematic *ex post facto*, but it might encourage a more openly and explicitly experimental approach to research. Critical research as *bricolage* experimentally brings together “concepts, questions, and controversies distinct to empirical sites” (Aradau, Huysmans, et al. 2015b, 9), “enact[ing] worlds in fragile ways that only become temporarily stabilized” (Aradau and Huysmans 2013, 13). In addition, and connected to the performativity and political character of methods, Aradau and Huysmans reconceptualise methods as *acts*. As such, they can affect ruptures in dominant knowledge and politics, for instance by supporting subjugated knowledge or subjects (Aradau and Huysmans 2013, 17). This resonates with what Sandro Mezzadra identified as a key task of militant research: “the ability to locate and consolidate the possibility of ruptures” (Mezzadra in Garelli and Tazzioli 2013c, 310).

This thesis builds on work within the multi-faceted tradition of critical border and security studies, and acknowledges the performative and political character of methods. Understanding methods as messy and experimental, I will outline how and why I conducted my research, and reflect on how particular choices I made – as well as my own positionality – influenced the research process. Before doing so, however, I will outline why I decided to focus on Frontex in particular in this study.

Studying Frontex

Founded in 2004, Frontex quickly became a symbol for tighter controls at – and beyond – EUrope’s borders, the advance of security technology, partnerships with private security and arms companies, and the failure to rescue those in distress at sea.

As such, it has attracted an enormous amount of criticism by NGOs, activists, and scholars, much of which is centred around issues of human rights (inter alia, Baldaccini 2010; Carrera 2007; Cholewinski 2004; Human Rights Watch 2011; Keller et al. 2011; Klepp 2010b; Papastavridis 2010; Pollack and Slominski 2009; statewatch and migreurop 2012). While a large part of this criticism focuses on Frontex's practical missions, the agency plays a crucial role in the EUropean border regime also in another regard:

[a]part from the operative elements, which aim to develop a European border protection practice, Frontex is a 'think tank', which conceptualises future blueprints of the border, as well as a laboratory, which generates experimental knowledge about the consequences of conceptual changes for the practice of 'border management'. Meanwhile, the agency portrays itself as a neutral, technology-oriented service provider, which stays out of political decision-making (Kasperek 2010, 113–114, my translation).

Frontex does thus not only shape border practices, but also border thinking. Given its importance as a “think tank” and “laboratory”, and its high symbolic relevance in EUropean border governance, Frontex makes for a suitable case study to better understand recent developments in the border regime. According to Yin (2003, 13), “[a] case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” While some have criticised case studies for failing to generate generalizable knowledge, Flyvbjerg (2006, 223) pointed out that “there does not and probably cannot exist predictive theory in social science.” Yin (2003) remarked that while case studies are not generalizable to populations, they are instead generalizable to theoretical propositions, and Walton (1992) even suggested that case studies might produce the best theory.

As noted, Frontex has been at the centre of human rights and humanitarian criticism of EUropean border controls. Seemingly oblivious of the stark criticism in its early years, the agency began appropriating these discourses in 2008, and has greatly increased references to them in its official communications and documents (see introduction). As legislative changes by the Commission and the Council obliged

Frontex to create the position of a Fundamental Rights Officer and an advisory Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, then Frontex executive director Laitinen declared that “[n]ot only respect for Fundamental Rights, but their active promotion, is a firm cornerstone of the agency’s strategy” (Frontex 2012a). In addition, Frontex signed working agreements with the UNHCR in 2008 and with the Fundamental Rights Agency in 2010 (FRA 2010; UNHCR 2008). Both organisations by now are also part of the agency’s Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, which comprises nine NGOs¹² and six international organisations¹³ who advise Frontex on all matters pertaining to fundamental rights. These developments have led some to be optimistic, suggesting that Frontex might be underway to become a “rights-advocate agency” (Horii 2012, 176). While my view of recent developments is more cautious, Frontex has clearly shifted its discourse considerably over the last years.

Nevertheless, Frontex is not (only) a humanitarian and human rights actor. It is at the heart of the surveillance system EUROSUR, the primary goal of which is “detecting and preventing irregular migration and cross-border crime” (European Commission 2011b). It continues using quasi-military equipment to detect unauthorised border crossings, and conceptualising irregular migration as ‘risk’ and ‘threat’. When the agency refers to “vulnerability”, most often it refers to the vulnerability of the borders to unauthorised migration (Frontex 2013b). Frontex’s main goal is the control of EUropean borders, and as shown in the introduction already, it combines the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in its work.

When studying how Frontex mobilises these three discourses in practice, it is important to bear in mind that the agency is embedded in a wider network of actors, including member states, EUropean institutions and agencies, NGOs, international

¹² AIRE Centre, Amnesty International’s European Institutions; Caritas Europa; Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe; European Council for Refugees and Exiles; International Commission of Jurists; Jesuit Refugee Service; Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants; Red Cross EU Office

¹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Council of Europe; European Asylum Support Office; International Organization for Migration; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights; Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

organisations, and others. Far from being the omnipotent actor that NGOs at times seem to portray it as, Frontex is itself partly controlled by member states and EU institutions (Rijpma 2010). With its roughly 300 staff members, it is dwarfed by the 175,000 national border guards in the EU (Frontex 2013c, 2015). Frontex is dependent on the European Parliament and the Council as budgetary authorities, and is controlled by a management board consisting of member state and Commission representatives (Peers 2011). It does not have the power and autonomy to control EUropean border governance that tends to be attributed to it, and is only one actor among many engaged in ‘managing’ migration in the EUropean border regime (Bialasiewicz 2012, 845). In this context, understanding social and political realities as messy is of particular relevance: imposing a singular, unitary principle or rationality on an agency situated amongst and partially controlled by a highly fragmented and diversified group of stakeholders would fail to capture the complexities of this environment itself, and of the agency’s negotiation of its position within it.

Despite Frontex’s embeddedness in this wider field, the agency remains an insightful actor to study in relation to developments in the border regime. It promotes a common “border guard culture” through its trainings, academies, and events; invests in research and development of ‘new solutions’ in border governance; and engages on its own terms with member states and EU institutions. It brings together border forces, the industry, and policymakers, and pro-actively constructs understandings of border governance through its website, media interviews, and other forms of public interventions. All its activities are based on ‘risk analyses’, and it sets standards regarding data collection, analysis, and reporting on migration. As such, the agency develops new ways of thinking, speaking, and acting in relation to EUropean borders (Kasperek 2010), and has acquired expert status. It is for these reasons that my research focuses on Frontex, while recognising that discursive shifts towards humanitarianism and human rights have occurred more widely.

Choices and methods in the research process

As arguably much of social scientific practice, my research process was not always the linear implementation of a previously elaborated, coherent and rational research design responding to my research questions. While I certainly attempted to follow what I had planned to do prior to beginning my fieldwork, the evolution of the research process, failed negotiations regarding research access, unexpected research opportunities, and insights gained during data collection led me to change course at times, adding and dropping particular aspects of the fieldwork along the way. In doing this, I was adhering to a flexible research design, allowing for adaptations of the research process according to unexpected eventualities and opportunities (see Baszanger and Dodier 2004; Guillaume 2013; Robson 2002; Voelkner 2013).

Ethnographic sensibility and nonlocal research

My approach was inspired by Gregory Feldman's (2012) conceptualisation of "nonlocal ethnography", a development of Marcus' (1995) "multi-sited ethnography". In his seminal article, Marcus argued that ethnographies were no longer taking place only in individual sites, but that there was an emerging trend in anthropological research to follow people, objects, metaphors, or stories as they moved between sites and analytical dimensions, thereby connecting the local to the global. Writing on policymaking on migration in the EU, Feldman criticises Marcus for privileging data gathered through direct, sensory contact and for attempting to establish cause-and-effect links between actors. He notes that in today's EUropean societies, indirect relations between different actors are more common than direct, organic connections. Policies and practices pertaining to immigration and border controls are not decided by a single sovereign, but emerge within networks. As specific rationales, discourses, and narratives become dominant in these networks, they as well as existing forms of bureaucratic and technical organising make particular policy choices appear logical or even inevitable. When studying issues of global governance, in Feldman's view, the challenge is to account for *empirical* processes that cannot be understood in their entirety through *empiricist* methods:

[n]onlocal ethnography shifts the accent of analysis from location-specific practices to rationales that enable, organize, and effectively integrate many disparate practices, in order to identify unmappable ethnographic terrain, as it were. ‘Nonlocal’ describes rationales and practices that are present *in* multiple locations but not *of* any particular location (G. Feldman 2012, 192, emphases in the original).

The goal of nonlocal ethnography is to uncover and question the rationales and discourses underlying border governance, and to understand “how policy actors create and reiterate a self-referential circle of policy phrases that become ever more resilient as they are repeated” (G. Feldman 2012, 20). While I studied a specific organisation rather than the network it is embedded in, Frontex itself is partially characterised by such indirect relations and network-like characteristics. The implementation of its joint operations is some steps removed from the work taking place in its headquarters, as chapter 5 will discuss in greater depth. Rather than taking a localised approach, I therefore attempted to gain insights into how those working for and with Frontex in a variety of contexts and locations made sense of their work, of Frontex, and of the wider field of border and migration governance.

An eclectic approach, nonlocal ethnography combines the analysis of policy documents, newspapers, press releases, public statements and email correspondence with personal interactions, participant observation and informal as well as formalised interviews. It breaks with the traditional privileging of participant observation, but strives to maintain the epistemological basis of ethnography. On the one hand, it seeks to *displace* the researcher, to overcome pre-existing biases and engage openly with previously unfamiliar ideas, values and practices. It however understands displacement not as the crossing of geographical boundaries, but instead as “any research (or personal) practice that dislodges the assumptions, discourses, and rationales the researcher would otherwise take for granted” (G. Feldman 2012, 195). On the other hand, nonlocal ethnography seeks to illustrate the *historical contingency* of present phenomena. This is achieved through genealogical approaches and analyses of context, rather than the traditional long-term embedding of the researcher in a specific community. In this way, nonlocal ethnography “critiques the hegemony of

“common knowledge” and traces the role of contingency in human affairs” (G. Feldman 2012, 196).

This approach to research enables researchers to maintain what Walters (2015) and Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) refer to as an “ethnographic sensibility”. Importantly, “[s]uch an outlook is able to capture the way in which technologies of control are cobbled together somewhat adventitiously: one can say they are emergent and never perfectly follow a plan” (Walters 2015, 6–7). Following this understanding, I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven Frontex staff members based in the agency’s headquarters, with a member of its management board, with an NGO representative of Frontex’s Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, with a national policeman of a EUropean country who had trained Frontex guest officers, with four EUropean guest officers who were deployed in Bulgaria in March, 2014 and three EUropean guest officers who were deployed in Sicily in August, 2014. The Frontex staff members I interviewed were senior officers in leading positions, who worked in different units within the agency (including the press office, risk analysis, operations, training, and fundamental rights). The variety of interviewees reflects my attempt to speak to individuals working for and with Frontex in different capacities and contexts. At the same time, I remained open and flexible in my selection of research participants in order to respond to new opportunities as they arose, and to mitigate access difficulties. All interviews took place between December 2013 and September 2014. Rather than introducing security, human rights, or humanitarian discourses myself, I asked open questions pertaining to the work of Frontex; the importance of border control; the agency’s role in EUropean border governance; and its challenges and future ambitions. Interviews were semi-structured, and those that could be audio recorded lasted between 36 minutes and 1:52 hours each, with an average of 65 minutes per interview.

Before conducting these interviews, I spoke informally with EUropean border guards, Frontex staff, and industry representatives during the EUropean Day for Border Guards in May 2013. When the opportunity presented itself to observe the agency’s 47th management board Meeting in February 2014 in its entirety, I seized it. On this

day, I also had the chance to have informal conversations with members of the management board during coffee and lunch breaks, and at a dinner and subsequent drinks I was invited to that same evening. Passing through Berlin, I attended a Frontex event on search and rescue and maritime border controls a week later, at which I again had the possibility to talk to some of the agency staff members I had previously met. Lastly, I had informal conversations with various guest officers deployed in the Frontex operations I visited, who were not always permitted to give formalised interviews. Particularly in Bulgaria I encountered a sizable group of guest officers who had been asked not to give me an interview by their national authorities but were happy to meet with me in groups and pairs, and talk about what moved them at the time – including their reasons to participate in the operations, and their thoughts on border controls and migration. While in Bulgaria and Italy, I also spoke informally with a range of local activists about their impressions of the situation at the borders, and of Frontex’s activities in the region.

Before beginning any of the formal interviews, I explained the purpose of the research to participants, and asked them to sign a consent form. Given my interest in finding out how individuals represented Frontex’s work to an outsider, and whether as well as how humanitarianism and human rights were mobilised in this representation, I framed the research project as being interested in the changes in EUropean border governance in recent years, and the role that Frontex had played in them. The consent form specified that all data would be anonymised if this was requested by participants. While none of the interviewees requested anonymity, I nevertheless decided to anonymise their statements for three reasons. First, the deliberately vague framing of my research project means that I cannot be 100% certain whether participants would feel comfortable with being cited in this thesis. Second, I am not seeking to make arguments about particular individuals in specific positions, but am engaging with an organisational discourse that transcends the individual interviewees and their reliance on it: attaching names or positions to particular statements would not add to the analysis undertaken in this thesis. Third, regarding interviewees in Frontex operations, there exist individual cases where I am not certain whether all necessary authorisations

were obtained by the interviewee before consenting to speak to me. As any form of identifying information might in these cases potentially lead to sanctions for the involved officers, I decided to remove such information from this thesis.

In those cases where I engaged in informal conversations rather than formal interviews, all my conversation partners were aware of my identity as a researcher. As these were often spontaneous conversations in informal contexts, including over dinner or drinks, I was not able to ensure full informed consent and cannot be certain whether conversation partners were always fully aware that what they told me might be used as part of my research. Due to the ethical issues arising from this ambiguity, I do not include direct quotations or identifying information on the individuals I spoke with informally in this thesis.

Engaging with Frontex staff, guest officers, and management board members in a variety of ways and contexts, I realised not only that there were gaps and discrepancies in the implementation of border governance, but came to see that Frontex itself was far from being a homogenous, unitary actor.¹⁴ To trace and make sense of these incoherencies, I decided to draw on organisational sociology in my analysis of the agency's self-representation. The starkest differences and contradictions emerged when interacting with Frontex guest officers in Bulgaria and Italy, as will be further detailed in chapter 5. While initially planning to spend 1-2 months at each site, I ultimately stayed in each location only for about one week. By going to these places and attempting to speak to staff within the Frontex operations I realised that there were numerous barriers to research access, and ultimately decided to shorten my stays – the reasons for this will be discussed in the reflexive section below.

Advocates of more 'traditional' ethnographic methods might argue that spending such short amounts of time in various places is insufficient to gain an understanding of the local context, and to build rapport with my participants. While these might indeed be limitations, my aim was not to gain an in-depth understanding of how the border was

¹⁴ Didier Bigo (2014) has described deep divisions within the security field, which are also visible within Frontex, and Law refers to organisations more generally as holding together noncoherent realities (Law 2004, 112–113).

performed in specific areas. As the discursive formations of humanitarianism, security, and human rights are articulated in different settings and by various actors, I sought to trace them in their multiplicity (see Cohn 2006, 92). Combining interviews, informal conversations and participant observation at particular events without imposing an established grid of analysis on them allowed me to get closer to understanding the perspectives and worldviews of Frontex's staff, management, and guest officers, and to be surprised by some of the more unexpected narratives I heard (see Bueger and Mireanu 2015, 129; Law 2004, 102). Moreover, the process allowed the various individuals involved in the research process to actively present their views, identities, and their work, partially shaping the conversations we had (see Jacoby 2006, 162). While the eclectic mix of methods I used in my research does not allow me to produce a detailed ethnography of Frontex operations, or the working of its headquarters, it provides important insights into how discourses circulate between different dimensions of the agency's work and how they allow staff, management, and guest officers to make sense of Frontex's activities and their own work.

Analysing documents: methodological remarks

The interviews, conversations, and participant observation I conducted to understand how Frontex positions and presents itself today were complemented with an analysis of written documents to trace changes in the agency's self-representations over the last 10 years. The analysis of changes in Frontex's language through time – which will be presented in chapter 4 – warrants a few remarks on the methodological implications of analysing documents. First, documents are often discussed as if they were the united voice of a particular organisation: authorship is often invisible to outsiders, and thus attributed to the institution as a whole rather than individuals within it (Freeman and Maybin 2011). Who is involved in drafting them or in supervising the drafting process, in ordering and presenting the necessarily selective 'truth' the organisation chooses to tell, however, matters: "[t]he point is that writing is about making, not mirroring" (Freeman and Maybin 2011, 163). Similarly, it matters who is able to read particular documents. In relation to Frontex, a great part of its documents and texts are never

published. Restricted for security reasons, its operational plans, evaluations, up-to-date analyses and a wealth of other information are not available to those outside the organisation. It is important to acknowledge that I could only access a small part of the documents written within Frontex over the last ten years, and specifically those that were meant to communicate to the outside, rather than specifying procedures, rules, or structures internally. As I was not able to spend time embedded within the organisation, my analysis of the published documents will have to stop short of taking the process of crafting them into account, including the multiple authors, strategic choices, and discussions that were likely involved in the creation of documents within the agency – nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the documents cited below were written by particular individuals, and are the result of particular choices.

A further characteristic of documents that is pertinent to the analysis in chapter 4 is that they are “always plural”: they relate, build on, and sometimes explicitly refer to other texts and are thus situated in a “network of textual relations” (Freeman and Maybin 2011, 162). Freeman and Maybin suggest that they be understood as social practices, and Harper points out that documents “are a part of the way in which the organisation talks to itself ... [and] about itself” (Harper 1997, cited in Freeman and Maybin 2011, 164). In doing so, Frontex for instance projects a unified, coherent organisational identity, despite the most likely diverse authorship of the documents in question, as well as divergences within the agency that will be discussed in chapter 5. The self-representations of Frontex, like language more generally, are always performative and never merely constative, regardless of the intentions of the authors (Freeman 2006, 65–66). Public documents like those analysed below are thus “a nexus of social practice. Documents serve to coordinate behavior as well as communicate information. They create groups, providing them with a common language and vocabulary and helping them express to others what they are trying to do” (Freeman 2006, 53). As such, they are important not only in terms of presenting and positioning Frontex vis-à-vis its environment, but also to foster a particular self-understanding and organisational identity within the agency.

As there are a plethora of written outputs the agency produced over the course of its existence, not all could be analysed in depth. By analysing all of the agency's annual reports on the one hand, I was able to see how Frontex explains and justifies its actions retrospectively, both vis-à-vis the stakeholders and the public. The elaborate reports allow for a contextualisation of the agency's actions, which are described in relation to particular understandings of the migratory and policy developments the agency describes. Complementing this analysis with an examination of all press releases published by Frontex between its foundation and 31/12/2014 on the other hand permits me to understand how the agency comments on events as they are unfolding and describes its work while it is ongoing. These much shorter texts do not offer the same richness in terms of justification and contextualisation, but they constitute the primary means of Frontex to comment on topical events and communicate speedily to external actors, including the general public. In a less systematic way, I also drew on several presentations by the agency to the European Parliament, on newspaper interviews with Frontex staff, and on "feature stories" published on Frontex's website.

This data, together with verbatim interview transcripts and notes from fieldwork observations, informal conversations, and those interviews where participants did not consent to be audio recorded, was entered into NVivo. Within the software, I subsequently coded all data in order to explore it and to help uncover discursive relationships between different statements, documents, and interviews (Robson 2002). In this process, I used the functionality that NVivo offers sparingly, drawing on its ability to pull out all instances of a particular code across diverse sources, while continuously returning to the entire documents and transcripts until the very end of the writing process, to ensure that I had not lost individual narratives or differences across interviewees when looking at specific codes in isolation. Data analysis and collection took place in a dialectic process, with preliminary analysis feeding into further data collection and vice versa.

Personal reflections and access issues

While research participants could influence the research process by presenting themselves and their work in particular ways, my own influence on the process was arguably at least as significant. Locating the self within the research, rather than presenting it as an objective or neutral exercise, is central to much of critical scholarship (c.a.s.e. Collective 2006, 476). To me personally and within critical research generally, reflexivity is of great importance. Salter noted that there are three ways in which positionality matters: positions within structures of race, class, gender, and nationality inevitably “influence both one’s unquestioned assumptions, one’s access, and the way that others relate” (Salter 2013c, 20). Secondly, he calls for reflexivity regarding the political and social conditions for the production of authoritative knowledge. Thirdly, Salter states that academics need to position themselves vis-à-vis the world: “there are a number of postures towards engagement: from scholar-agitator to activist to social critic to policy-advisor” (Salter 2013c, 23). Cultivated particularly – but not only – among feminist scholars, reflexivity encourages a continuous re-interrogation of research and scholarship (Ackerly, Stern, and True 2006, 4):

[w]hereas personal experience is thought by conventional social science to contaminate a project’s objectivity, feminists believe one’s own awareness of one’s own personal position in the research process to be a corrective to “pseudo-objectivity.” Rather than seeing it as bias, they see it as a necessary explanation of the researcher’s standpoint which serves to strengthen the standards of objectivity, resulting in what Sandra Harding has called “strong objectivity” or “robust reflexivity” (Tickner 2006, 28).

Writing on autoethnography, but equally applicable to reflexive writing, Doty (2010) argues that engaging in such an approach connects the researcher with their work, enables them to include emotions, intuition, and felt experience in their writing, and brings them into the story they seek to tell. In this spirit, the remainder of this chapter will offer some reflections on the choices I made throughout this research process, on how my own positionality influenced what and how I researched, on research access negotiations and failures, and on some of the limitations I see within this present work.

Positionality

Personally, I am treading the fine line between academia and activism, and I care deeply about the issues I write on in this thesis. I decided to do research on this particular topic because I felt perplexed by Frontex's apparent turn to humanitarianism and human rights, and noticed that friends whom I knew through activism and political work were either confused or outright cynical and disbelieving regarding the change in rhetoric taking place. Rather than viewing this development as a deliberate strategy of Frontex to fool the public or its stakeholders, or as a sign that Frontex was developing into a "rights-advocate agency" (Horii 2012, 176), I cultivated what Cynthia Enloe refers to as "curiosity". As she writes, "[d]eveloping a new kind of curiosity is not just academic. It takes energy. It is political. It is cultural. It is personal" (Enloe, 2007, p.1, cited in Aradau and Huysmans 2013, 15). For me, doing research on these issues has been all of this. It has been a quest to understand better how, why, and with what effects humanitarian and human rights discourses – which are the backbone of much of the political work challenging and opposing the exclusionary and violent border regime – have been appropriated seemingly at ease by Frontex and other state actors. My hope is that understanding the relationships of these discourses with security better might encourage reflections on some of the inherent shortcomings and problems of humanitarianism and human rights as bases for political change among those who most frequently rely on them: academics, activists, and NGOs.

When I wrote my board review paper for this PhD in May 2013, I wrote about at least 18,673 deaths at EUrope's borders since 1988, documented by Gabriele del Grande's blog *Fortress Europe*¹⁵. The blog has not been updated since February 2016, when the death toll was marked at 27,382. Given that death estimates vary widely depending on the source of information used, it is difficult to give an up-to-date number that can be compared with Del Grande's earlier blog counts. Clearly, however, the unfathomable numbers increased further since February, with 2,726 deaths documented in between

¹⁵ <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.co.uk/>

1 March and 11 August 2016 (IOM 2016). While I was planning, doing, and writing up my research, far more than 10,000 individuals lost their lives as a consequence of the policies and practices that form the backdrop of this thesis.¹⁶ Watching the ever-repeating news on ship wrecks, deaths, and missing people unfold throughout my time as a PhD student was deeply disturbing, and more than once led me to question the relevance of my research. At the same time, it reinforced my conviction that political change is urgently necessary, and needs to be sought in a variety of ways and on different levels – including through critical scholarship, public engagement, direct action, and political pressure groups.

I regard border controls and the discrimination based on nationality they entail as inherently problematic. Accordingly, I disagree with many of the assumptions Frontex staff make and the work the agency does. These beliefs, as well as my position within a university and a network of activists, my class background, age, nationality, race, and gender influenced how I conceptualised and implemented my research, and how my respondents interacted with me. Throughout my fieldwork, I however attempted as much as possible to put my own opinions and political ideas aside. My reasons for doing so are summed up in an excellent chapter by Carol Cohn, in which she reflects on her research with nuclear defence intellectuals, and which is worth quoting at length:

[a]lthough what impelled me into this research was a political critique, in the actual doing of the work I have had to try to put that aside. This is not because I hold a positivist notion of objectivity, but for several reasons. First, because my goal is to learn, to find out what's out there, without imposing preconceptions about what people are like, what the issues are, or what form of analysis or theoretical framework is most appropriate to engage. I was not trying to prove a point or test a hypothesis,

¹⁶ Over the course of writing this PhD, the interest in counting deaths in the Mediterranean also seems to have increased substantially. While Gabriele del Grande was one of the first to document and publicise deaths, there now exist several research projects collecting data on ‘migrant deaths’ in the Mediterranean (see e.g. <http://www.mediterraneanmissing.eu/> and <http://www.borderdeaths.org/>). Also the IOM began publicly documenting such deaths in 2013, and regularly provides updates on death counts on a dedicated website (<http://missingmigrants.iom.int/>). Nevertheless, it is remarkable that neither Frontex nor other border forces collect data on this issue up to today. As Aas and Gundhus argue, a “lack of a ‘will to knowledge’ about migrant mortality” persists within Frontex (Aas and Gundhus 2015, 10).

but to see what was there and think about it. [...] My other reasons for always trying to set aside my politics, opinions, and analyses were much more personal. [...] First, temperamentally, I am a listener. In a conversation, give me the choice between telling people what I think about something, or finding out how they think about it, and I will almost always choose the latter. [...] Second, I find it excruciatingly painful to have direct confrontations with very powerful people who are doing (or have done, or will do) what I consider to be terrible things, or things with terrible effects. [...] Finally, and maybe most significantly, I find it both personally and professionally untenable to talk with people without being able to be honest about what I want to know, and why I am talking with them. To do that, I have to let my genuine interest in how the world looks to them, and why it does so, be what I and my research are about (Cohn 2006, 104 & 105).

Like Cohn, both my personal predispositions and my desire to learn and understand led me to listen openly and curiously, much rather than expressing my own views in this particular project. And like hers, the focus of my research was very much driven by a genuine desire to learn about my participants' worldviews, and to understand how they viewed their work, Frontex, and EUropean border governance. While my political convictions differed substantially from what I heard from many of my interviewees, I had a genuine curiosity to learn about their perspectives. My goal was not to condemn, but to learn about and comprehend realities in their complexities. While I believe that political change is necessary, I believe that potential alternatives must be based on a thorough understanding of the status quo – including the realities, views and values of border guards. From an initial curiosity as to how anyone could choose to become a border guard and have a worldview that aligns with it, my questions shifted towards the wider discourses circulating in this field, and their power to influence and shape people's thoughts and interpretations (see Cohn 2006, 103). As Hacker wrote, "I needed an approach that didn't require bad guys with bad attitudes . . . an approach that would let you look at the nature of the way the whole thing was put together" (Hacker, 1990, cited in Cohn 2006, 91). Meanwhile, I acknowledge that my research – as any other – was influenced by my positionality and beliefs (Miller and Fox 2004, 37).

Mostly, research participants were content to hear about my general interest in these questions and did not pressure me to take a stance myself. Where they did ask me to position myself, I tried to remain as elusive as possible. When joining the members of

Frontex's management board for dinner, for example, one of them requested my confirmation for his impression that I was rather left-wing in terms of politics. Seated in the middle of high representatives of member states' national border guards, whom I assumed to have rather different political views from myself, I was uncertain what to reply at first. Seeking to avoid a clear answer that might lead to confrontation or suspicion, I admitted that if forced to decide whether being right-wing or left-wing, I'd situate myself more towards the latter. This did not satisfy the questioner, however, who went on to request which party I had voted for during the last national elections in Germany. Given that I had coincidentally been barred from voting for technical reasons, I used that anecdote to shift the focus of the conversation, and succeeded in doing so. As this incident illustrates, I tried to remain elusive to my interviewees wherever possible, while avoiding to lie or distort the truth. Nevertheless, I felt the dilemmas resulting from my self-identification as a political activist doing research in the security field throughout the research process. At times, I felt deeply uncomfortable about the views my interviewees shared with me, some of whom showed crude, biased, and racist attitudes towards border crossers (see Jacoby 2006, 168). At other times, I felt guilt and discomfort about holding back my own views. This was particularly the case when I realised that I actually liked some of my interviewees and conversation partners, despite deeply disagreeing with their career choices. Some of them, besides volunteering their time to speak with me, made a conscious effort to help me in my research, putting me in touch with other interviewees or otherwise enabling me to gain access to meetings and research opportunities.

While I was attempting to learn from the research participants and understand their views when interacting with them, the fragmented nature of my fieldwork meant that in between my various research stints, I met activist friends and colleagues, learned about new campaigns, and shared some of the knowledge I had gained through my academic work within those communities. Moving back and forth between the identities of the researcher and that of the activist felt alienating at times, and brought about the above-mentioned feelings of guilt and discomfort. In particular one episode I experienced as deeply uncomfortable, as it challenged the neat separation of the two

identities which I had attempted to uphold. At an event in Berlin on maritime search and rescue and border controls, Frontex's interim executive director *Gil Arias-Fernández* was speaking. Despite the event being fully booked, I was enabled to attend by Frontex's management, having observed their board meeting only the week before. At the event, however, a large number of activists were present, too. Some were friends and colleagues, others belonged to groups I simply knew of. As the atmosphere was extremely adversarial, with a group of activists trying to disrupt and derail the discussion and repeatedly shouting "murderers" and other defamations at the panellists, I felt rather uneasy in my chair. While the event caused major frustration among Frontex staff, who told me afterwards that they would reconsider doing public events in the future, it did not result in my visible association with activists or NGOs. Nevertheless, it served as a pertinent reminder that my position as a researcher driven by curiosity and a desire to understand was very different from what I was used to regarding activist networks, where Frontex tends to be viewed as 'ultimate evil', a symbol for the violence and death the border regime has caused over the last decades.

Despite the discomfort I felt at times, I still believe that putting my political beliefs aside while doing research was important. Not only did it allow interviewees to express themselves in the way they saw fit, without necessarily having to legitimise, defend, or justify their work, but it also allowed me to remain open for surprises, for shared understandings and unexpected views. When speaking informally to a group of EUropean border guards over some wine, for example, one of them leaned over and told me quietly that he did not believe in borders. He asked me what would happen when all borders disappeared, and I responded that so-called "illegal" migration would cease to exist. In response, he exclaimed "exactly!", and proceeded to explain that everyone should be allowed to freely move where they wanted to. Exchanges such as this, occurring in confidence in the context of a very informal encounter with a group of border guards from various countries would have been difficult had I clearly positioned myself politically, rather than expressing an openness and curiosity to converse with and learn from the guest officers.

Not only my political stance, but also my identity as a white, EUropean, young, middle-class, and able-bodied cis-woman influenced my research, and particularly my fieldwork. Most palpable to me were the comments and distinct dynamics related to my identity as a young woman, which influenced how research participants interacted with me. I first became aware of this during the evening of the EUropean Day for Border Guards in May 2013, when I joined the dinner and party hosted by Frontex for the EUropean border guard community, without at this stage having contacts among their staff or the various national border guards and industry representative attending the event. While introducing myself to small groups of attendees over dinner and asking them if I could join their conversations, I also spent considerable time alone during the evening, observing what was happening around me. Throughout the night, I found myself approached by individual young men, who sought to establish contact in ways familiar to me from student parties, bars, or clubs. While perhaps not particularly surprising in hindsight, the realisation that in that particular context I was seen primarily as a young woman alone at a party rather than a researcher or even a critic took me by surprise, and ultimately led to me leaving the event earlier than planned when I began to feel uncomfortable as a result of one staff member's advances.

At times, I had the feeling that being a young woman made it easier to get particular guest officers in the operations (who were mostly young men) to speak to me, and to do so in an informal manner also where the authorisation for an interview had been denied by their national authorities. In a different context, this factor was explicitly mentioned: over dinner after the management board meeting, one attendee made a reference to the Fundamental Rights Officer being a charming woman, and being liked and well respected for this reason. He then referred to me, saying that I knew well myself how these things worked, and pointed out that most of those attending were obviously older men. The comment was meant as an encouragement to pursue further ideas for fieldwork I had been uncertain over, but it reveals how my gender and age influenced how I was perceived (and at times welcomed) by staff and management members. As others have noted before, being a young woman meant that I was not viewed as particularly threatening, and might have encouraged some people to speak

with me more freely, or even agree to speak to me at all (see Cohn 2006, 97). On the flipside, it also led to not being taken as seriously.

Access

As noted already, my positionality certainly had an impact on how I could negotiate research access with Frontex, which was not always a straightforward process. Being a security actor, Frontex is keen to stay in control of the information given to outsiders, and research access was at times difficult to obtain. As Salter noted, this is not an exception, but characteristic of security research: “access is particularly sensitive in the security field” (Salter 2013c, 22). Early on in the research process, in summer 2013, an internship with Frontex’s Fundamental Rights Officer was advertised. I decided to apply for it in the hope of spending a few months in the agency’s headquarters, doing research at the same time. Despite being shortlisted, I was ultimately not selected for the position. Upon request, I was informed that they had preferred a candidate who was more fully committed to Frontex, rather than using this opportunity also for their own research. When asking whether I might instead be able to conduct a research stay with the same officer in February 2014, four months of negotiations via email ensued. There were major concerns regarding my ability to access internal documents, and we discussed possibilities to enable me to come while limiting such access. When in June, the request was put on hold again until yet another meeting to take place in October 2014, I stopped actively pursuing it, focusing instead on moving forwards with interviews and visits to Frontex operation in Italy. I was too uncertain whether these negotiations would lead anywhere after months of seeing them postponed time and again, and felt growing pressure to move forward with my PhD at the same time. The time pressures associated with doctoral (and other kinds of) research, including through the strict time limits attached to PhD funding, ultimately led me to abandon plans for a research stay within Frontex, and move ahead with the project in other ways.

The ability to conduct interviews in the headquarters depended mostly on the press officer, who set up four appointments when I requested to speak to different staff

members. As I had obtained the contact details of two other staff members through the internship application process, I used those to organise additional interviews myself during my trip to Warsaw in December 2013. Research within Frontex operations was more difficult. In order to speak to Frontex staff in the headquarters, only their consent was needed. To interview guest officers in an ongoing operation, however, I was told that I required the authorisation of Frontex, the host member state, and the guest officer's member state, in addition to the consent of the individual in question. In Bulgaria, the national authorities officially allowed me to visit 'the border' for a maximum of 1 hour, writing simply that "[b]order guards are very busy. You can not [sic] stay for 4-6 weeks", as I had requested. After a lengthy bus ride from Sofia, I was picked up from the local bus station in Elhovo by the Frontex support officer and a Bulgarian colleague, who had agreed to take me to 'the border'. I had been informed beforehand by the Bulgarian authorities that "on the Bulgarian-Turkish border a border police operation [was] ongoing. [...] civilians [were] not authorized to enter the zone." I was thus dependent on my Frontex companion for access to the area. About 16km outside of Elhovo, we stopped to meet a team of EUropean guest officers. It was apparent that they had been deployed there – presumably out of the way of their colleagues – specifically to speak to me and a film crew who was visiting at the same time. At all times, a Bulgarian press officer was present, who was occasionally asked for permission regarding particular requests. Unsurprisingly, the guest officers I interviewed had received phone calls from Frontex before my arrival, and I was told that they had been instructed that they could speak to me and answer (most of) my questions, but that they should not allow me to use a recording device.

After about an hour and a half at the location I was interrupted while doing an interview, and told that I had to leave. The support officer kindly drove me to the hotel in the nearest city (Yambol), where many of the guest officers – including himself – were staying, and encouraged me to hang out in the lobby and speak to his colleagues. He promised to send around an email to his guest officer colleagues informing them of my presence, and letting them know that I was interested in speaking to them. Due to the triple authorisation needed for interviews, conducting those turned out to be

difficult: several guest officers told me they had asked their (various) national authorities if they could speak to me, but had been requested not to do so. Spending time in the hotel lobby and speaking informally to various officers became my main activity while there. The informal situations and above-mentioned gender dynamics – all the guest officers I encountered there were men, and most of them in their late twenties or early thirties – initially helped me to establish contact and to chat with them informally. It however also meant that I soon got requests regarding whether I had facebook or whether I had a partner, and that it was non-negotiable that my drinks at the hotel bar were paid by guest officers, etc. Unprepared for requests for personal, rather than professional contact, and uncertain about how to maintain a professional, distanced relationship while at the same time hoping for officers to speak to me informally and in confidence, I eventually decided to leave the fieldwork site, and to return to Sofia. I realised that I struggled with the idea of building up a friendly relationship with my interviewees that might last beyond the moment of research because of their work as border guards: I did not want to become friends with them. At the same time, I was not in a situation where I could use a more formal interview context to obtain information while maintaining a more distanced approach.

In Italy, I encountered the further difficulty that guest officers were spread out over different locations in Sicily. My arrival in Syracuse caused tensions, as somewhere in the Frontex hierarchies the message that I was coming had gotten lost: my first interview with one of the guest officers (unexpectedly) led to anger and frustration on the host member state's side, as it was seen as not fully authorised. Nevertheless, I managed to conduct interviews with two other officers present in Syracuse at the time. Requests to accompany the guest officers during their work were however denied, and no further assistance to contact other guest officers was forthcoming. Where I stayed, I could speak to only three people, as they and a translator were the only ones working for the Frontex operation in that location. As I did not have contact details of the other teams deployed on the island, conducting more interviews ultimately proved impossible. Moreover, guest officers in Syracuse stayed in apartments, meaning that there was also no space where to coincidentally meet and talk beyond the context of a

pre-arranged interview. The difficulties of gaining further access, combined with the high costs of staying in Sicily during the tourist season, led to my decision to travel back to Scotland.

As noted above, insights gathered through the combination of methods I used stop short of providing a comprehensive understanding of how Frontex works as an organisation, and in some ways offer more superficial insights than an in-depth ethnographic study at one particular location might have. On the other hand, these insights tell far more about how different dimensions of the agency's work relate to each other, how discourses circulate and how various actors within the agency make sense of their work and their employer. Conducting research through 'nonlocal' methods has allowed me to understand Frontex as a fragmented, and at times incoherent organisation, and to see its operations and its work within the headquarters as only partially connected. The choice for taking an experimental, opportunistic approach to methods was in part due to expected difficulties in gaining research access to the agency. Trying various research sites, access routes and seizing opportunities as they arose allowed me to minimise the risk of being 'shut out' or being granted only minimal access. In a further effort to decrease such risks, I enriched the access I was granted from the beginning with analyses of official documents, press releases, speeches, and media interviews by Frontex. By combining various methods and sources in this way, I gained multifaceted and fragmented insights into the agency and its various uses of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security.

Limitations

While my research offers timely insights into the relationships between humanitarianism, human rights, and security, and how they are mobilised together in the border regime, there are certainly limitations to the focus and approaches I have taken in this project. Most obviously, perhaps, there are limitations related to the restricted access that I had, being for instance barred from observing Frontex operations in practice. This would have allowed me to see both the technologies and

objects employed in Frontex's work, as well as being able to observe border practices myself. My insights are primarily related to how various individuals affiliated with Frontex present the agency, and in particular how they *talk* about it. I could observe such practices only to very limited extents, by for instance witnessing the interactions of staff and management members and guest officers at the European Day for Border Guards, the management board meeting, or during the operations. Nevertheless, engaging with how the research participants presented Frontex was helpful in understanding whether discursive formations circulating within the agency inform the views of staff members, guest officers, and management.

In addition, the fragmented insights I gained throughout the research process do not allow for a deeper analysis of a number of dynamics in the functioning of Frontex. In particular, I will not be able to analyse dynamics relating to the nationalities, races, or genders of those working for Frontex, despite having spoken to officers from a variety of different countries, and with different gender identities. While I believe that valuable analyses could and should be undertaken in relation to these and other dynamics, in part to explore whether there exist further discrepancies and incoherencies within the agency along such axes of identification, I will not be able to offer such an examination in this thesis. Not only did I not include specific questions pertaining to nationality, race, or gender in my interview schedule, but also, the number of interviews I conducted is not sufficiently large to identify similarities or differences in the research data across these different axes.

By choosing to focus on an actor aiming to govern and control migration, I might furthermore be reproached of reinforcing what De Genova (2013a, 2013b) refers to as the Border Spectacle, the imaginary of a tightly controlled, highly exclusionary border that succeeds in perfectly controlling mobility. As he notes,

[p]articularly in the denunciatory mode of a putative critique of border militarization and aggressively restrictive immigration policies, migration studies frequently risks becoming an unwitting accomplice to the spectacular task of broadcasting the one-dimensional falsehood of border enforcement as the perfect enactment of ever more seamless and hermetically sealed exclusionary barriers (De Genova 2013a, 255).

Indeed, my research focuses on Frontex as a security actor rather than foregrounding the determination and innovations of individuals who find ways to overcome and subvert controls despite increasing patrols and higher fences. At the same time, however, I expose internal contradictions and tensions within Frontex, illustrating rather clearly that the agency is not in full control over what it does even in its operations. As such, I hope to challenge the view of ‘Fortress EUrope’ as a tightly sealed entity following a singular rationality, and present a much more fragmented, less rational and cohesive image of EUropean border governance.

Lastly, my study might be considered to contribute to an already excessive focus of migration studies on EUrope, resulting in a charge of EUro-centrism. This is difficult to argue with, as it is certainly true that a EUro-centric focus is reflected also in my own work. For me personally, the focus on EUrope has to do with my political interests in this region. I am appalled by current policies and practices, and my desire to contribute to a change in border and migration governance inspires and drives my academic work. Given my position as a EUropean citizen, this might also be the context where I have the biggest chance of being taken seriously and listened to.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to offer some insights into how I conceptualise methods and methodology, and how I used particular practices within my research project. Conducting critical research, I am subscribing to different standards and understandings of research than those dominant in international relations today. By offering detailed reflections regarding the methods I used and the motivations and aspirations that drove my research, I showed how my choices and beliefs influenced the research process underlying this thesis. In particular, I reflected on the dilemmas I faced because of positioning myself as an activist and an academic, and showed how my identity as a young, white, EUropean woman likely influenced the ways in which research participants interacted with me. Revealing some of the struggles and difficulties I faced in terms of research access illustrates some of the difficulties in

conducting research on bureaucracies more generally, and security organisations specifically. Despite these difficulties and limitations, I found the research process extraordinarily rewarding, and enjoyed pursuing my sense of curiosity by interacting with and learning from those working for and with Frontex. In addition, I gained revealing and timely insights into the agency's self-representation and its appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights. The next chapters will introduce these insights, by focusing first on changes within Frontex's official discourse over time (chapter 4), on contradictions and incoherencies within the agency itself (chapter 5), and on the effects of Frontex's turn toward humanitarianism and human rights on its position within the wider border regime (chapter 6).

Chapter 4: Knowing Frontex - Two Perspectives

In the first 10 years of its existence, Frontex has become a key player in EUropean border governance. Not only has it grown at great speed in terms of budget, staff members, and responsibilities, it has also become a focal point for criticism and discontent, and a symbol for EUrope-wide efforts to reinforce controls of the Schengen borders. At the same time, Frontex has been depicted as a one-size-fits-all solution to ‘problems’ and ‘crises’ in border governance, and has seen ad-hoc increases to its budget in times of public mourning about deaths at sea, as well as in times of public anxiety due to heightened arrival numbers in EUrope. While often vilified by activists, the agency has thus emerged as the standard EUropean response to a diverse range of ‘problems’, and has been presented as such by EU institutions and national policymakers. While having gradually increased its powers and competences in recent years, Frontex has remained a controversial and highly symbolically charged actor in EUropean border governance. The following three chapters will turn to analyse the agency, building on the conceptual underpinnings and methodological approach introduced in chapters 1-3.

Chapters 4 and 5 will engage with different ways of knowing Frontex, and will offer three perspectives on the agency. In doing so, these chapters also offer some reflections on how Frontex can be known, and which knowledges about the agency are produced by different kinds of scholarly analyses. Rather than presenting one coherent account of Frontex, I will present three outlooks on it, each of which provides a partial answer to the question of how we can understand Frontex and its shift towards humanitarianism and human rights. First, this chapter will outline the history of the agency’s foundation as it has been understood in the academic literature, with Frontex emerging as a compromise between the diverse interests of EU institutions and member states within a wider context of ongoing securitisation of migration in EUrope. It will show what these insights reveal about the coexistence of diverse rationalities within Frontex today, and what assumptions and understandings they rely

on. Second, I will reflect on the role of language in the political field, and discuss the usefulness and limitations of document analysis as a specific way of knowing organisations' changing representations and interventions through language.

These reflections will be followed by an analysis of Frontex through its published documents, in particular its annual reports and press releases. As media, activists, EU parliamentarians and national politicians put a spotlight on the role and the activities of the agency, Frontex carefully constructed a public image of itself, communicating to stakeholders and the general public by means of reports, press releases, appearances at European and governmental hearings, and occasional interviews in national media outlets. As the introduction to this thesis showed in brief, quantitative terms, this public image has changed through time, gradually beginning to include more references to humanitarianism and human rights. In this chapter, I will analyse what subjectivities are created through Frontex's documents, which positions and discursive formations are negotiated in them, and how Frontex's self-representations in these documents have changed through time. In the conclusion of this chapter, I will reflect on how examining the history of Frontex's foundation on the one hand, and analysing its published documents on the other hand renders Frontex knowable to social scientists. To complement the insights into Frontex's shifting discourse presented in this chapter, the following chapter will offer a third perspective on Frontex. Following a new institutionalist approach and drawing primarily on interview data, chapter 5 will analyse Frontex as an organisation in a contested and contradictory environment.

First Perspective: Frontex as a compromise

Examining Frontex's foundation

One way in which Frontex has been understood in the academic literature is through the history of its foundation, in particular an examination of the interests of various actors in negotiations on European border controls that were taking place in the early 2000s. The wider political context at the time was one in which interior ministries were seeking to find ways to avoid constraints on a security-centred, restrictive governance

of migration, without necessarily sharing the same vision on how this might best be achieved. Guiraudon and Lahav showed how efforts to move matters of immigration and border controls to the EU level in the late 1990s and early 2000s more generally were motivated by the desire of home affairs ministries to avoid domestic constraints, such as national courts and NGO mobilisation (Guiraudon 2000, 2003; Guiraudon and Lahav 2000). Building on this work, Lavenex (2006, 2007) argued that similar concerns also led to the increased emphasis on externalising migration controls, as officials working within home affairs were seeking new ways to avoid political, normative, and institutional constraints emerging on a EUropean level. Together, the authors demonstrated that EU policy processes in this area have been closely bound up with institutional interests and competitions. This could be argued to be the case regarding the establishment of Frontex, too.

What gave rise to these negotiations and could be regarded as Frontex's 'founding myth' was the persistent belief that the lifting of border controls among Schengen member states necessitated stricter controls at these states' external borders. This myth is still invoked today, as the reintroduction of border controls across EUrope in response to a perceived 'loss of control' at the external borders in 2015 and 2016 illustrated (see e.g. European Commission 2016a). Also in a promotional video by Frontex, it is reiterated: "[a]s internal border controls were removed, the need to strengthen external borders became paramount. The Schengen chain is only as strong as its weakest link" (Frontex 2013d). Accordingly, cooperation on immigration and border controls in EUrope began in the 1980s with the Schengen treaty, which contained initial provisions on inter-state cooperation regarding matters of immigration and asylum (Schengen Agreement 1985). While these agreements were made between individual states, the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht incorporated cooperation on matters of migration in the EU framework as a whole (Léonard 2010, 233).

Five years later, the Treaty of Amsterdam further consolidated an EU approach to migration that was characterised by continued a focus on security. It introduced the notion of EUrope as an "Area of Freedom, Security and Justice" (AFSJ), which was

framed as being in need of protection from outside threats (Kostakopoulou 2009, 187; Lavenex 2001, 2005; Pellerin 2005). This security-focused approach was continued also at the 1999 Council meeting in Tampere, which officially incorporated a commitment to externalise border controls in order to prevent migration towards Europe (Lavenex 2007, 134; Samers 2004). The perception that external border controls needed to be improved remained strong in the following years, and led Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain to commission a feasibility study exploring the idea of a common EU border police in 2001. While agreeing that better cooperation in this field was needed, the UK and several Scandinavian countries expressed reservations regarding such far-reaching ambitions (Jorry 2007; Monar 2005; Neal 2009).

The years between 2001 and 2003 were marked by a series of negotiations, accommodation, and compromises between the Commission and the Council on the one hand, and between various member states within the Council on the other hand (Neal 2009, 340). While the Commission initially took up the results of the feasibility study, the December 2001 Justice and Home Affairs Council in Laeken did not make reference to a common border guard, reflecting the reluctance of some of the participating countries. The presidency conclusions did however request the Council and the Commission to look into “mechanisms or common services to control the external borders” (European Council 2001, para. 42; Jorry 2007). Nevertheless, the Commission held onto the idea of a common border guard, and published a communication that outlined the path towards an EU Corps of Border Guards in May 2002 (European Commission 2002). In June, the Council reiterated its concern to improve cooperation and coordination among member states, but postponed any decision on a common border guard that could *support* (rather than replace) national forces to an undetermined later stage (European Council 2002, 27).

Instead, a so-called ‘Action Plan’ created the “External Borders Practitioners Common Unit”, consisting of the previously existing “Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum” working group (SCIFA) as well as representatives of the national border guards, which became known as SCIFA+ (Neal 2009, 341). The unit

was set up in autumn 2002, and promptly implemented a number of pilot projects in different member states (Jorry 2007). The work of SCIFA+, however, was viewed as ineffective by the Commission and several member states (Léonard 2009, 377; Neal 2009, 342). As the 2004 enlargement of the European Union moved closer, concerns regarding the perceived challenges in governing the external borders of the 10 new member states grew, and the interest to progress with improving and harmonising external border controls across the EU remained great (Ekelund 2014, 109–110). Given the dissatisfaction with SCIFA+, the Thessaloniki Council Conclusions in June 2003 invited the Commission “to examine [...] the necessity of creating new institutional mechanisms, including the possible creation of a Community operational structure, in order to enhance operational cooperation for the management of external borders” (European Council 2003, para. 14).

Seizing this opening, the Commission proposed that the Council establish a “European Agency for the Management of Operational Co-operation at the External Borders” in November 2003 (European Commission 2003). The Commission proposal seemed to take the differing stances among member states into account, and suggested establishing an agency that was to be tasked primarily with coordinating the cooperation between member states, as well as providing a number of other services to them.¹⁷ Less than a year later, in October 2004, Council Regulation 2004/2007 created the agency, commonly known as Frontex (European Council 2004). Importantly, taking a decision on Frontex this swiftly allowed for the marginalisation of the European Parliament in the process. The 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam was followed by a five-year transition period in which the Parliament was only consulted, and decisions in the Council needed to be taken unanimously. As of January 1st, 2005,

¹⁷ According to Art. 2(1) of its founding regulation, Frontex initially had six tasks, namely to: “(a) coordinate operational cooperation between Member States in the field of management of external borders; (b) assist Member States on training of national border guards, including the establishment of common training standards; (c) carry out risk analyses; (d) follow up on the development of research relevant for the control and surveillance of external borders; (e) assist Member States in circumstances requiring increased technical and operational assistance at external borders; (f) provide Member States with the necessary support in organising joint return operations” (European Council 2004). These were expanded in 2007 and 2011 (European Parliament and Council 2007, 2011).

the European Parliament would have been actively involved in Frontex's foundation through the co-decision procedure, which gave it equal standing with the Council in terms of passing regulations in some issue areas, including those pertaining to migration and asylum (Léonard 2009, 380).

While the Parliament was consulted prior to the Council's decision on Frontex's foundation, its proposed amendments to the regulation – including attempts to strengthen the community character of the agency by empowering the Commission and the Parliament as overseers, and to reinforce the agency's fundamental rights obligations in the document (European Parliament 2004) – were ignored (Léonard 2009). As a result, fundamental rights were only referenced in the preamble of Frontex's founding regulation, not in the substantive text itself (European Council 2004). Mostly, the Council followed the Commission's proposal in establishing Frontex, but decided to strengthen states' powers over the agency: the management board was to consist of a representative of each Schengen member state, in addition to two representatives of the Commission (European Council 2004). As Sarah Léonard summarised, "Member States were able to agree relatively swiftly on the creation of an agency that they would be able to control [...] and which would be limited to the coordination of operational cooperation at the external borders" (Léonard 2009, 381).

What does this perspective tell us?

This account of Frontex's establishment provides a number of interesting insights, but also relies on assumptions that are to some extent in tension with those adopted in the remainder of this thesis. As has been apparent, the institutions involved in the setting up of Frontex in this narrative are conceptualised to some extent as unitary and rational, pursuing particular objectives in a process of rational negotiation and reasonable compromise. While disagreements between member states in the European Council form part of the explanation for Frontex's foundation, tensions and discrepancies within the Commission, Parliament, and member states are left out of

the picture. Rather than this constituting a fundamental contradiction with the remainder of this thesis, this account is a simplification of the internal dynamics of each of the actors involved. In this way, it is a perspective that ‘zooms out’ of each of the institutions and reduces their complexity, focusing instead on their interrelations, which from a distance appear as coherent and rational. This perspective, albeit necessarily partial, offers valuable insights into Frontex as an organisation in a contested and diverse environment.

As outlined, from this vantage point Frontex has been seen as a compromise between those who were striving for a EUropean approach to border guarding – including the Commission, Germany, and Italy – and those who were reluctant to give up parts of their sovereign powers, such as the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries (Campesi 2014; Neal 2009). Accordingly, a variety of perspectives and rationalities are seen as having informed the foundation of Frontex, which was established as the response to diverse concerns. It was conceived as an agency intending to serve member states who felt that practical support was needed at their (or others’) external borders, while at the same time ensuring that it would not be perceived as a threat to those member states concerned about safeguarding their sovereign right to control their borders. Disagreements also included different visions of what border guarding should look like.

As Campesi wrote, “Frontex was [...] born in the context of an ambiguous dialectic between the technocratic ideology of risk management and the recurrent call for emergency measures” (Campesi 2014, 128). It was founded partly as a technocratic agency tasked with ‘risk management’, analyses, and research, advancing the normalisation of governing migration as a security issue (Neal 2009). At the same time, the agency faced repeated demands by member states for “urgent and rapid action” at their external borders (Carrera 2007, 12). In 2007, a change of Frontex’s founding regulation by the Council and the Parliament reinforced this latter element, establishing the mechanism of “Rapid Border Intervention Teams” for situations “of urgent and exceptional pressure, especially the arrival at points of the external borders of large numbers of third-country nationals trying to enter the territory of the Member

State illegally” (European Parliament and Council 2007, Article 1(1)). The amendment obliged member states to provide personnel in these situations, making ‘solidarity’ compulsory. It also made clear that an emergency-focused outlook – or exceptionalist securitising, following Huysmans’ (2014) terminology (see chapter 2) – would continue to coexist with a technocratic risk-management approach – or diffuse securitising – within Frontex.

In addition, looking at Frontex through a history of its foundation explains why diverse stakeholders continue to partially control the agency today. The national border guards of all state signatories of the Schengen acquis continue to oversee the agency’s activities by serving on its management board. Currently, the management board consists of 30 heads of border guards of Schengen treaty signatories, two Commission delegates, and two representatives of non-Schengen states’ border forces who are invited to attend meetings, but not allowed to vote on decisions (the UK and Ireland). The management board supervises the executive director, the agency’s annual reports and programmes of work, budget, organisational structure and staffing policy, among other duties (European Council 2004, Articles 20 and 21). Due to its composition,

board discussions are still tilted towards political issues. National interests have remained key at the cost of the effectiveness of the agency (Cowi, 2009, p. 65). Similarly, although the executive director (appointed by the board on proposal of the European Commission) is formally independent (Art. 25 Regulation 2007/2004), his appointment is strongly influenced by intergovernmental compromises (Wolff and Schout 2013, 316).

Member state interests thus continue to be of vital importance to the agency’s activities and functioning, and Frontex remains directly accountable to them.

In addition to the powers of member states and the Commission, the Parliament has had an influence on Frontex since the agency’s foundation. It has had partial control over Frontex’s budget since the beginning, and has seen its competences in the field of EU policymaking expand more widely since then.¹⁸ After having been marginalised

¹⁸ As mentioned above, the co-decision procedure between Parliament and Council was introduced in 2005 for some issue areas, including those pertaining to immigration and asylum. The entry into force

in the founding process of the agency, the Parliament has used its growing competences to exert pressure on Frontex in relation to human rights and SAR. In 2011, the European Parliament and the Council expanded Frontex's mandate a second time. In the process leading up to the new regulation, the European Parliament insisted on strengthening the role of fundamental rights in Frontex's founding regulation (European Parliament 2011; statewatch 2012a). With the amendments, Frontex thus not only received greater powers – such as the permission to own and lease equipment, and to create and use information systems to exchange data with other EU agencies – but was also obliged to create a Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights consisting of NGOs, EU agencies, and international organisations, as well as to establish the position of a Fundamental Rights Officer inside the agency.

Understanding Frontex's foundation as a compromise between diverse interests allows for tracing and identifying these interests and influences both in its initial setup, and in its contemporary functioning. It makes clear that the agency is not an entirely autonomous and independent actor, but that it was created in a way that sought to satisfy diverse concerns, and continues to be held accountable by diverse actors. This opens up the possibility that the coexistence of different discursive formations in the agency's public documents might be a reflection of both these aspects. It also suggests that differences and tensions between coexisting rationalities, goals, and interests are likely to have been present and productive within Frontex since its very beginning. What this historical-institutional perspective fails to account for, however, is how Frontex has negotiated the different interests and pressures in its environment once it became an actor in its own right, and how it has manoeuvred its position vis-à-vis its stakeholders and the outside world more generally. While not being entirely separate and independent from its environment, Frontex is also not fully steered or controlled by it. As Frontex issues public documents and press releases of its own accord, examining the ways in which it has presented itself provides a different perspective on

of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 extended co-decision – henceforth referred to as the ordinary legislative procedure – to 40 policy areas, again increasing the powers of the European Parliament (Servent 2012)

the agency, complementing the historical and institutions-focused one outlined thus far. Analysing its public communications provides insights into how the complex position the agency finds itself in has been negotiated vis-à-vis the public, and how this has led to an increase in humanitarian and human rights references in public documents published by the agency.

Second Perspective: Frontex's public self-portrayal over time

As discussed in greater depth in chapter 3, analysing Frontex's changing self-representations through its public documents has particular methodological implications. Most importantly, perhaps, documents tend to create the impression of a unitary, coherent organisation: authorship, disagreements, negotiations, and compromises during the writing process are invisible when examining the final text (Freeman 2006; Freeman and Maybin 2011). In addition, public documents serve not only to communicate information, but are also performative: in Frontex's case, they create an image of Frontex towards the outside and position the agency within its wider environment, while also cultivating a particular organisational identity within the agency. I could only access a small part of the documents written by those working for Frontex over the last ten years, namely texts that publicly present the agency towards the outside. As such, the impression of a united voice emerging from Frontex is even more pronounced, as I could not draw on internal communications and differentiations for my analysis. Importantly, the resulting fiction that Frontex is a unitary and coherent actor that might at times seem to emerge in the discussion below will be challenged and dismantled in chapter 5.

The early years: 2005-2008

When examining annual reports and press releases issues between 2005 and 2008, the first few years after Frontex began its activities, its public interventions appear clearly security-focused: the agency describes the need to “combat”, “fight”, and “tackl[e]

illegal immigration” (Frontex 2006a, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d, 2008a), and “to avert the illegal immigration threat” (Frontex 2007e; similarly Frontex 2007f). In its early years, the agency writes primarily about “illegal” (im)migrants and (im)migration. As Neal noted, Frontex uses security discourses despite the rather neutral wording of its founding regulation: “[c]rime, illegal immigration, human trafficking and international terrorism are all uttered in the same breath” (Neal 2009, 350). At the same time, however, Frontex’s mandate inscribed a risk management logic in the agency: it was tasked with providing integrated risk analyses, trainings, and follow up on relevant research. Frontex described its activities as “intelligence driven” already in its first reports, and established the “Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN)” in 2006. It also invoked a managerial approach to border governance by referring repeatedly to “Integrated Border Management (IBM)” and “best practice” in these early years (Frontex 2006b, 2007d, 2008a).

The risk-based approach inscribed in its mandate and the urgency and exceptionalism invoked at times constitute two distinct modes of operation within the discursive formation of security (see chapter 2), which coexist in Frontex’s self-representations. In a 2007 statement on “facts and myths” about Frontex, Laitinen spoke to the tension between both, and made clear that in his view, Frontex ought to focus on risk management rather than emergency response:

[t]he *raison d’être* of Frontex are not emergency operations but the consistent introduction of well planned regular patrols by Member States, in order to limit urgent missions and to integrate the management of borders in all its dimensions defined by the Member States. Doctors say that the best intensive care unit cannot replace prophylaxis; I would say that it applies also to borders (Frontex 2007g).

While expressing a clear preference for a risk management based approach, the medical metaphor used by Laitinen shows that ultimately, both approaches were perceived as necessary and complementary by him: while prevention was key and was likely to decrease “emergency operations”, urgent interventions would be needed in cases where prevention had failed, or where unforeseen incidents occurred.

In the first years of its existence, Frontex declared that one of its objectives was “reducing illegal immigration” (Frontex 2007a; see also Frontex 2010b, 5, 42–44), which resonated with member states’ interests at the time, particularly those which were experiencing boat migration (Rijpma 2010). Initially, the agency omitted any reference to potential asylum seekers among the “illegal migrants” it reported on. In response to a request by the Immigration Law Practitioners Association (ILPA) regarding asylum claims in its HERA and NAUTILUS operations, Frontex replied that “FRONTEX is not aware of any claims of asylum which have been submitted to the national authorities during the referred joint operations. Nevertheless, it could be the case, that hosting Member State[s] could receive asylum claims later on, just after the interrogation” (cited in Guild and Bigo 2010, 270). As Guild and Bigo problematized, the lists of nationalities identified through interviews conducted by Frontex guest officers included Somalis, Eritreans, Iraqis and Pakistanis, who were among the largest groups of asylum seekers at the time. Regardless of this, however, Frontex initially sought to avoid any responsibility for or association with asylum claims in its operations, and categorically described the individuals it sought to stop as “illegal migrants”.

While mobilising presenting migration as a risk and a threat, Frontex made reference to saving lives, too. Some of the first news items released on the agency’s website in late 2006 and early 2007 describe the purpose of its HERA operation as not only controlling “illegal immigration”, but also as “reducing the numbers of lives lost at sea” (Frontex 2006c; similarly Frontex 2007a). What was portrayed as rescue at sea entailed the physical diversion of ‘saved’ individuals back to the countries of departure, in this case Senegal and Mauritania. The aim of joint patrols was presented in February and April 2007 as being “to stop migrants from leaving the shores on the long sea journey and thus reducing the danger of losses of human lives” (Frontex 2007h; see also Frontex 2007i). In the annual report for 2006, the agency reported that “[d]uring HERA I and II operations, close to 5000 illegal immigrants could be stopped from setting off for a dangerous journey that might have cost their lives” (Frontex 2007d, 12). In the 2007 report, it was stated that out of 401 “migrants”, 166 were

rescued – without however specifying whether this meant that they were in distress and needed assistance, or whether they were “saved” by being stopped to take the risk of travelling further towards EUrope (Frontex 2008a, 24).

These references to saving lives by preventing migration were part of a wider discursive narrative common in EUropean member states at the time. In 2003, then Prime Minister Tony Blair had proposed the establishment of extraterritorial camps for refugees, justified by a reference to saving lives. In 2004, German and Italian interior ministers Schily and Pisanu advocated similar plans, again arguing that such camps would stop deaths at sea. And also in response to the arrival of boats in the Canary Islands in 2006, similar arguments were made (Hess and Tsianos 2007; Klepp 2010a). Frontex’s use of this wider narrative did thus not occur in isolation. While emphasising that joint operations contributed to saving lives by stopping individuals from departing, Frontex made clear that it did not intend to be a search and rescue agency. In a press release in 2007, executive director Laitinen was moved to publicly emphasise the security mandate the agency had been given:

[I]ast weeks [sic] I learned reading the press that Member States don’t want Frontex to fulfil its tasks; Member States want Frontex to become a search and rescue body. Legal advisors could have some problems in explaining why a Community agency should take action in an area that is out of the mandate not only of the agency but also the European Union (Frontex 2007g).

It seems that Laitinen attempted to resist a public call by one or several member states for Frontex to be more involved in search and rescue activities. His response marked Frontex’s refusal to become a “search and rescue body”, which the agency invoked also in recent years (as will be further discussed below). In firmly rejecting calls to actively conduct search and rescue operations, Frontex self-identified as a security actor, albeit one that emphasised the ‘humanitarian’ by-product (saving lives at sea) its security-focused joint operations allegedly resulted in.

While references to saving people in distress at sea were made early on in Frontex’s publications, its annual reports and press releases did not address human rights at all within the first years of its existence. Neither did the agency refer to human rights

when reporting to the Commission on a technical mission to Libya in 2007 (Buckel and Wissel 2010; Frontex 2007j), in spite of NGOs warning about the dire situation in the country for those on the move at the time (Amnesty International 2005, 2007; Frelick 2009; Human Rights Watch 2005). When evaluating its Nautilus operation – in which Human Rights Watch alleged illegal pushbacks to Libya took place – and related operations, Frontex deputy director Arias-Fernandez was quoted as saying:

[b]ased on our statistics, we are able to say that the agreements [between Libya and Italy] have had a positive impact. On the humanitarian level, fewer lives have been put at risk, due to fewer departures. But our agency does not have the ability to confirm if the right to request asylum as well as other human rights are being respected in Libya (cited in Human Rights Watch 2009a, 37).

While pointing to the allegedly humanitarian effect of its operations, Frontex thus eschewed any responsibility for making sure that human rights were respected in Libya, despite highly critical public reports at the time. In fact, it took almost three years for Frontex to refer to human rights in its press releases or annual reports: in June 2008, the first reference to human rights appeared in a news piece on the occasion of a cooperation agreement with UNHCR (Frontex 2008b). As the following section will show, references to human rights became more regular from then on.

In conclusion, the first years of Frontex's establishment were characterised by a self-representation that portrayed "illegal migration" as both a threat and a risk to European states, and constructed Frontex as "fighting" this threat primarily by improving preparedness through its risk analyses and trainings, and by actively working to decrease unauthorised arrivals in European states. As such, the narrative presented in the agency's annual reports and press releases connected diffuse securitising practices and technologies to a wider framing of migration as an existential threat, i.e. exceptionalist securitising (Huysmans 2014, see chapter 2). In this framing, Frontex was first and foremost presented as a protector of Europe. In an early form of quasi-humanitarian reasoning, this self-representation co-existed with claims that Frontex's explicitly security-oriented operations had the positive side-effect of saving the lives of those who were diverted back to their countries of departure.

Simultaneously, however, press releases actively distanced the agency from demands to conduct search and rescue operations, and emphasised Frontex's security mandate. Importantly, neither asylum nor *non-refoulement* nor human rights played a role in these early self-representations, which focused very strongly on Frontex's role in keeping individuals away from EU territory.

Incorporating human rights and humanitarianism: 2008-2011

While Frontex's early publications were characterised by its framing of migration as a "threat" to "fight", the agency slowly began to change its language in the years to come. In its 2009 General Report, Frontex began using the term "irregular" instead of "illegal" in conjunction with "migrant", and subsequently used "illegal" primarily to describe actions – such as "illegal border crossings", "illegal stay" or "entry" – rather than individuals. Instead, "irregular" was used more often in conjunction with "migration", and particularly "migrants". This change might be seen as a move away from what has often been criticised as incriminating and securitising language, and corresponds to a wider shift within the European Union more generally (see Morehouse and Blomfield 2011). At the same time, however, Frontex continued to construct human mobility as a security problem. The agency listed irregular migration in the same sentence as "serious organised crime" and terrorism (Frontex 2013e, 7; similarly Frontex 2011a), and reiterated its objectives "to curb illegal migration", "to tackle irregular migration", and "to better fight trafficking in human beings" in its 2010 annual report (Frontex 2011b, 4, 14, 24). In 2010, the agency moreover started to publish public versions of its risk analyses, in which asylum applications are counted as one "indicator" of the "threat of irregular migration" to which member states' borders might be "vulnerable" (Frontex 2010c, 2010d, 2010e, 2010f, 2011c). Despite the subtle shift from "illegal migrants" towards "irregular" ones, Frontex thus continued the risk-focused language of its early years.

In addition, the agency engaged in the occasional, time-specific declaration of situations as exceptional, urgent, or part of a crisis, and also in this way fostered an

interpretation of mobility as a security issue. Most extensively, Frontex engaged in exceptionalist securitising in 2011, the year of political upheavals in North Africa and increased boat departures towards Europe; but also before and after that point in time, crisis-invoking statements can be found. In relation to the RABIT deployment in Greece in 2010, Frontex stated that the situation there had to be brought “under control” (Frontex 2010g), implying that it had been out of control beforehand. Reflecting back on the year, the annual report of 2010 stated that “Frontex demonstrated capability and flexibility in tackling the significant challenge related to irregular migration in 2010 — the drastic increase in migratory pressure towards the EU via the Greek-Turkish land border” (Frontex 2011b, 15). When reporting on 2010 statistics in May 2011, Frontex wrote that “detections of illegal border crossing soared on previous years as the dominant routes used by migrant smugglers continued to shift. The Greek-Turkish land border in particular saw massive increases in migratory pressure” (Frontex 2011d). Meanwhile, the fact that the overall number of detections in 2010 had actually slightly decreased in comparison to 2009 was mentioned briefly, leaving the reader with the impression of an increasing and threatening trend, rather than a state of stability.

As noted already, 2011 was the year in which Frontex most actively furthered images of crisis and emergency in relation to Europe’s southern borders. Even before being prompted by member states, Frontex reacted publicly to rising numbers of arrivals in Italy. On February 14th, the agency released a news item addressing the “sudden migratory situation in Lampedusa”, stating that a fact-finding team had been dispatched and operational responses were being prepared in Warsaw, despite the absence of a request for assistance by Italy at that point (Frontex 2011e). A day later, the agency first published some statistics on the numbers of individuals arriving at Italy’s shores and compared those to previous years, and then issued another news item reporting that Italy had requested the assistance of Frontex for “targeted risk analysis on the possible future scenarios of increased migratory pressure in the region [...] and the possibility of the opening up of a further migratory front [...]” (Frontex 2011f). The high pace of reporting on the unfolding “crisis” was kept up, with another news

item four days later announcing the imminent deployment of guest officers to Italy (Frontex 2011g), and further ones published on February 22 and 25 reporting on the beginning of the Hermes operation and the deployment of guest officers (Frontex 2011h, 2011i).

Two press releases on March 11 and 25 reported on the development of different scenarios and responses by Frontex, and the latter referred to “the notable increase in migratory pressure on Italy and the island of Lampedusa in particular”, announcing the widening and extension of JO Hermes (Frontex 2011j, 2011k). Executive director Laitinen assured readers that “Frontex is closely monitoring the development in North Africa and stands ready to assist the Member States operationally if requested. We are also continuously developing additional operational responses for potential rapid deployment throughout the Mediterranean if needed” (Frontex 2011j). Through the frequency of the reporting, the emphasis on “the highly volatile situation in North Africa” (Frontex 2011l) and Frontex’s readiness to act, as well as the use of war-like terms such as “migratory front”, the agency’s press releases contributed to the perception of the situation as one of crisis and exception.

Also when Frontex reported back on activities in 2011 in its general reports of 2011 and 2012, this framing prevailed. The agency stated that there had been the need to “to tackle the exceptional and urgent emergency situation caused by massive migration flows at the Greek-Turkish land border” (Frontex 2012b, 15), and designated occurrences in Italy as “mass influx of migrants” (Frontex 2013e, 51), “migratory crisis situation” (Frontex 2012b, 21), “massive and disproportionate migration flows” (Frontex 2012b, 49), and a “migration crisis”, which “demanded a reinforced operational response package” (Frontex 2013e, 51). Frontex’s reporting on the “migration crisis” of 2011 resonated with a wider narrative within the border regime that labelled the arrivals of people from Tunisia and Libya as “exceptional” or even an “exodus” (see e.g. European Commission 2011c; Times of Malta 2011). Importantly though, Frontex took a pro-active role in the framing and continuous reporting of this “crisis”.

In response, the agency received a boost to its resources: it obtained €30 million from the Commission and €1.8 million by Schengen Associated Countries in addition to its 2011 budget of €86 million, representing an increase of 27.3% (European Commission 2011d; Frontex 2011m, 2012b). More importantly, perhaps, it positioned itself as the “solution” to the “problem” at hand and as capable of supporting member states proactively. As Jef Huysmans noted, the activities Frontex undertook in response to the proclaimed “crisis” nevertheless had a strong risk component, consisting of information gathering, identification of new arrivals, early detection and prevention of crime, and updating risk analyses (Huysmans 2014, 95). Once again, techniques of diffuse securitising took place in a context that was framed within a language of exception and crisis both within Frontex’s public documents, and in the wider political narratives at the time.

As noted in the previous section, there were nearly no references to asylum seekers in the first documents and statements published by Frontex, which classified all those “intercepted” categorically as “illegal immigrants”. From 2009 onwards, asylum seekers were mentioned and portrayed as a risk both to EU member states as well as to the asylum system: “[a] large volume of [asylum] applications will put a strain on border control authorities and will inevitably prevent the rapid provision of protection for those third-country nationals with legitimate claims” (Frontex 2010b, 6). Implying and at times explicitly stating that many asylum applications were “unfounded”, Frontex thus claimed to safeguard the interests of “legitimate” asylum seekers through its work. In addition, Frontex press releases started reporting on “unscrupulous smugglers” which “lured these desperate people” into dangerous situations, sometimes resulting in their deaths (Frontex 2010a). By introducing the commonly used narrative of the “unscrupulous smuggler”, Frontex drew on the discursive formations of humanitarianism and security simultaneously.

In this narrative, smugglers are blamed for the deaths and suffering of innocent and defenceless people on the move on overcrowded and unseaworthy boats or in otherwise unacceptable conditions caused by the smugglers’ greed for profit and disrespect for human lives. As Pallister-Wilkins argues, the narrative “references

Frontex's core mandate of border law enforcement and humanitarianism premised on a victim and savior dichotomy that has (as we have seen) come to dominate multiple forms of governance over the previous two decades" (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 64). It presents Frontex as a protector of EUrope and of smuggling victims simultaneously, while shifting blame for deaths and suffering away from the agency. Further drawing on the discursive formation of humanitarianism, annual reports and press releases also featured increased references to saving lives at sea again, after a period of relative quiet since 2007. It was pointed out that "the rescue of people in distress at sea were among the key elements highlighted during maritime joint operations in 2010", and that "maritime joint operations resulted in significant decrease of illegal migration flows, also avoiding high numbers of boatpeople in distress; this contribution to saving lives is considered the most appreciated effectiveness" (Frontex 2011b, 42). While still formulated somewhat clumsily in terms of the "effectiveness" of operations aimed to primarily decrease unauthorised arrivals in EUrope, these increasing references to saving lives indicate a renewed connection of security and humanitarianism in the agency's publications. In March 2011, also the exploration of the use of UAVs was justified with their potential to reduce the death toll by saving more lives at sea (Frontex 2011a).

These renewed references to humanitarianism also coincided with the appearance of fundamental rights in Frontex documents. In the annual report for 2008, it read: "[f]ull respect and promotion of fundamental rights, belongs to the value "Humanity". It is the most important corner stone of modern European border management" (Frontex 2009, 10). Over time, the emphasis put on fundamental rights in Frontex's publications gradually increased. In the 2009 annual report, it was stated that "full and sincere respect of Fundamental Rights is a firm and strategic choice of Frontex. It will be demonstrated through the values of the agency in all its operational and administrative activities and when developing the capacity of the Member States" (Frontex 2010b, 4). In the 2010 document, this statement was reiterated, and already in the foreword of the report, the chair of the management board listed a number of specific activities relating to fundamental rights that Frontex had conducted over the course of the

previous year (Frontex 2011b, 4, 7). In addition, the report featured a page-long section on fundamental rights, demonstrating the agency's commitment to them. While not as frequently and extensively as humanitarian and security-related discourse positions, also fundamental rights were occasionally linked to security issues. In 2010, Laitinen was quoted in a news release as saying: “[f]ighting crime at the border is a key objective of the Lisbon Treaty, one of the cornerstones of which is full respect for fundamental rights. There is no need to compromise between these two goals – they are complementary and can be achieved in tandem” (Frontex 2010h). Similar to the intertwining of security and humanitarianism discussed above, fundamental rights were thus incorporated into a primarily security-centred outlook in Frontex's public documents in this period.

The clear increase in fundamental rights references in Frontex's reports and press releases between 2008 and 2011 coincided with increasing pressures by the European Parliament on the agency. In 2010, negotiations for the 2011 amendments of Frontex's founding regulation commenced. In March 2011, Frontex's management board passed the agency's Fundamental Rights Strategy and a Code of Conduct, explicitly incorporating fundamental rights in the agency's working routines for the first time (Frontex 2011n, 2012c; Neumann 2013, 26). In the announcement accompanying the decision, Laitinen was cited as saying “[f]undamental rights and human dignity have always been at the heart of Frontex's values” (Frontex 2011n). Frontex's press releases thus began to present the agency as pro-actively and sincerely committed to fundamental rights only months before these principles were more firmly inscribed in its legal basis, while references to saving and protecting those in need increased as well.

In sum, Frontex's self-representation between 2008 and 2011 began to shift considerably vis-à-vis its earlier documents. While an understanding of migration as a risk to be managed remained central in the agency's public narratives, the active construction of “crises” in 2010 and 2011 reinforced an exceptionalist reading of events in Europe at the time, framing them as “crises” in need of urgent responses. In addition, the common narrative on “unscrupulous smugglers” began to feature in the

agency's public documents, in which the discursive formations of humanitarianism and security were tied up simultaneously. This coincided with a renewed emphasis on Frontex's contributions to saving lives at sea. Importantly, references to fundamental rights increased significantly during this period, and fundamental rights were presented as having always been central to Frontex's work. In this period, then, the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security came to be increasingly intertwined in Frontex's public documents, and the agency began to be presented as a protector of human rights, a saviour of people from unscrupulous smugglers, and a protector of EUrope at the same time.

Mainstreaming and connecting human rights, humanitarianism, and security: 2011-2014

While the invocation of a crisis and emergency in Frontex's public documents was most visible in 2011, the threat scenario connected to this year of "exception" was also invoked in the years since then. Despite relatively low numbers of arrivals in 2012, the agency reported that "the risk of a resurgence of illegal border crossings on the Eastern Mediterranean route remains" (Frontex 2013e, 9). In late 2013, the agency reported on "migratory pressure [that] was comparable to the same period in 2011" (Frontex 2013f). And with arrival numbers increasing again, Frontex stated that 2013 "saw a massive upswing in irregular migrants [sic] arrivals in the Central Mediterranean. This [...] meant there were more detections of illegal border-crossing at the EU maritime borders than during the height of the 2011 'Arab Spring'" (Frontex 2014a). Also the 2013 annual report spoke about "a huge increase in Syrian nationals", "intense migrant flows" and reported that "the volumes of migration flows almost returned to the level of the exceptional pressure stemming from the "Arab Spring" of 2011" (Frontex 2014b, 54, 63). As migratory movements increased further since then, the reference point of 2011 was given up eventually, and in 2014 a news release instead compared arrivals to the "the exceptionally high [arrival] levels of summer 2013" (Frontex 2014c) and referred to "the extremely high migratory pressure Italy is currently subject to" (Frontex 2014d).

Warning of what was to come, the agency's first quarterly risk analysis report in 2014 moreover stated that "[s]ince the start of the war in Syria, a rather insignificant drop in applications during winter is normally followed by a larger increase during the following summer, with the respective curve resembling more upward stairs than the usual waves" (Frontex 2014c). Contrary to some of the earlier statements, this last forecast points to a predictable increase in mobility, fitting in with Frontex's risk-focused approach rather than feeding into the rhetoric of unexpected exception or emergency. As noted already, much of the agency's work remains based on risk analyses and migration management. Different versions of its risk analyses reports have been published seven times a year (though this number increased in 2015),¹⁹ and have outlined and forecasted changes in migration patterns. A risk-based narrative suggests pre-planning and preparedness rather than emergency responses, and coexists with the more urgency-driven mode of securitising the agency has emphasised at other times.

In recent years, much of the language of Frontex's reports and press releases has continued to present unauthorised migration as a risk and a threat to Europe. In the 2012 annual report, for instance, the agency clearly outlined the risks posed through document fraud:

[f]irstly, document fraud allows migrants in irregular or unlawful situations to enter the territory of a Member State, and potentially also to move freely within the Schengen area. Secondly, individuals assuming a bogus identity and operating within black markets seriously affect internal security, and undermine international criminal investigations as well as national social systems and the ability of any state to effectively manage and protect its legitimate communities. Finally, document fraud profits and progressively demands closer and stronger links to organised crime groups as modern documents require more skilled and expensive techniques to produce quality forgeries (Frontex 2013e, 35).

¹⁹ Until 2014, this included one Annual Risk Analysis, four Frontex Risk Analysis Network Quarterly Reports, and an Eastern European Borders Annual Risk Analysis as well as a Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis. From 2015, the agency started publishing quarterly reports for the Eastern Borders and Western Balkans, and released an Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community Joint Report.

The presence of individuals relying on false passports – which for many constitutes the only way to enter and reside in EUrope that does not involve life-threatening boat journeys or equally dangerous, hidden land border crossings – is constructed as a threat to the economy, the welfare state, internal security, and the “legitimate communities” EUropean states are seeking to protect. The associative connections made between diverse issue areas in the statement above create what Huysmans refers to as a “patchwork of insecurities,” and contribute to a generalised sense of unease in relation to unauthorised migration (Huysmans 2014, 84). In particular associations between migration and (organised) crime were made repeatedly in Frontex’s publications in this time period. In Frontex’s 2013 annual report, smuggling was framed as a “serious cross-border crime” (Frontex 2014b, 15). It was moreover warned that Frontex’s “analysis of the different waves of migrant boats that have targeted Italy’s sea border since November 2013 suggests development of the logistical & organisational capacities of the criminal groups which facilitate the gathering and embarkation of migrants along Libya’s coast” (Frontex 2014c). By associating irregular migration with organised crime, black markets, and internal state security, the agency thus continues to construct migration as a diffuse risk affecting diverse areas of EUropean societies. Labelling boat arrivals as “waves” that are “targeted” specifically at Italy’s coast moreover feeds into a wider describing migration in terms of fluidity – such as “flood”, “tide”, or “flow”, which further contributes to the dehumanisation and securitising of people on the move (see Pugh 2004).

As noted above, 2011 was a turning point for Frontex in terms of its fundamental rights obligations, as the agency was mandated to create the position of a Fundamental Rights Officer, and to establish a Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights. Accordingly, its 2011 annual report made a particular emphasis on fundamental rights. Not only did executive director Laitinen report on the structural changes the regulation amendments required, but he also emphasised that this was in line with Frontex’s previously existing commitments to fundamental rights in a foreword to the report:

[d]espite all these changes, some things remain the same: the need to maintain Frontex's vision, goals and values by ensuring quality in everything we do; the commitment and professionalism required to deliver constant and reliable support to the Member States; and an unfaltering recognition of the importance of fundamental rights at every stage of operations will all stand us in good stead for whatever challenges the future may hold (Frontex 2012b, 5).

This emphasis on fundamental rights continued in news items issued in 2012 and 2013, with Laitinen being cited in May 2012 as saying “Frontex, from the very beginning of its work, took the respect of fundamental rights as a sine qua non in the performance of all its tasks [...]” (Frontex 2012d). In September 2012, Laitinen stated that “Not only respect for Fundamental Rights, but their active promotion, is a firm cornerstone of the agency's strategy” (Frontex 2012a). Also in Frontex's annual reports, fundamental rights were reported about in increasing breadth. In the 2012 and 2013 reports, 5-6-page annexes reported about activities related to fundamental rights, as did numerous sections within the reports (Frontex 2013e, 2014b). In both, the values and mission of Frontex were described as strongly connected with fundamental rights, as the following quote illustrates: “[h]umanity links Frontex's activities with the promotion and respect of Fundamental Rights as an unconditional and integral component of effective integrated border management resulting in trust in Frontex” (Frontex 2014b, 11). Adherence to fundamental rights was thus framed not only as a value in and of itself, but also as a means to gain trust and legitimacy.

When examining recent publications, it appears that fundamental rights language has effectively become “mainstreamed” in Frontex's publications, with references to their centrality and importance incorporated into many of its press releases, public statements, and all of its annual reports. Importantly, fundamental rights language has been combined with other aspects of Frontex's self-representation, beginning to construct a narrative of an agency that is promoting best practices, professionalism, the rule of law, and fundamental rights through its trainings and joint operations. At the same time, there has been a shift away from focusing on the reduction of irregular migration within Frontex's publications. While in the annual reports and press releases published during Frontex's early years, a decrease in irregular migration was described as one of the agency's primary goals, its 2012 annual report instead cites the

importance of “reduc[ing] the loss of lives at sea and the number of irregular migrants who enter the EU *undetected*” (Frontex 2013e, 20, my emphasis). Relatedly, a 2014 quarterly risk analysis acknowledged the displacing effects of Frontex operations, pointing out that migratory routes were shifting rather than stopped in response to the agency’s activities (Frontex 2014c).

In addition to an increase in references to fundamental rights, Frontex’s public documents in recent years saw a growing positive emphasis on the efforts the agency was undertaking to save people in distress at sea: its 2011 annual report stated that 23,192 “migrants in distress” had been saved, the following year’s report spoke of 5,575 “migrants”, and that of 2013 reported repeatedly that more than 37,000 “persons”, “people”, and “migrants in distress” had been saved (Frontex 2012b, 50; 2013e, 17, 52; 2014b, 3, 16, 64; see also Frontex 2012e; 2013f). At least since late 2012, the agency has described itself as “Europe’s biggest Search and Rescue (SAR) operation” on its website (Frontex 2013a). Also during the European Day for Border Guards 2013, an annual event organised by Frontex to strengthen the EUropean border guard community, an emphasis on Frontex’s efforts to save people in distress at sea was made. The director of Frontex’s Operations Division, Klaus Roesler, noted in a panel discussion that “it’s worth to reiterate that two out of three detected migrants are rescued, are subject to a search and rescue operation. It means that border surveillance regularly turns into a search and rescue operation coordinated by the responsible search and rescue centres, following international law” (Roesler, in Frontex 2013g).

Roesler’s statement illustrates a commitment to a “rule-of-law” humanitarianism, i.e. to assisting member states’ Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs) in search and rescue operations when asked to do so. Similarly to 2007, there exists a simultaneous insistence that Frontex’s mandate remains limited to border security. This position became particularly clear during a partially public exchange between Frontex and the Italian minister of the interior Alfano in summer 2014. As boat arrivals increased, Alfano mobilised humanitarian appeals to call for greater European responsibility in the region. In June, he argued that it was *Europe* that needed to take over the Mare Nostrum operation, given that those saved wanted to go to Europe rather

than specifically to Italy (La Repubblica 2014a). Shortly thereafter, he announced that Mare Nostrum would be substituted by a Frontex-coordinated operation (La Repubblica 2014b). At this point, a struggle over Frontex's responsibilities and character became visible: soon after Alfano's claim that Mare Nostrum would be replaced by Frontex, the agency was quoted as denying this in media reports, saying that it had neither the resources nor the mandate to do so (La Repubblica 2014c; Meier 2014). Unperturbed, Alfano began speaking about "Frontex plus" as the replacement for Mare Nostrum (La Repubblica 2014d; La Stampa 2014).

After meeting Commissioner Malmström in Brussels, Alfano and the Commissioner reiterated that "Frontex plus" would substitute Mare Nostrum (ANSA 2014a; European Commission 2014b). Frontex interim executive director Arias Fernandez however insisted that the agency's mandate remained limited to border security during a hearing at the European Parliament. Announcing that Frontex would launch a new operation in the Mediterranean, he reiterated that "Joint Operation Triton will not replace Mare Nostrum. Neither the mandate nor the available resources allow for that replacement" (LIBE Committee 2014). When answering questions by Parliamentarians, Arias Fernandez further clarified that

Frontex has never given its name to any operation. So "Frontex plus" is totally misleading for the public and also for you [...]. In any case, the difference between Mare Nostrum and Triton is fundamentally the nature of the two operations. While Mare Nostrum is clearly a search and rescue operation, Triton will be with the main focus on border control, border management. Although as it is obvious, saving lives is an absolute priority (Arias Fernandez in the LIBE Committee 2014).

Similar declarations were also made in Frontex press releases at the time, which simultaneously emphasised the importance of saving lives, and Frontex's border control mandate (Frontex 2014d, 2014e, 2014f). A concept paper Frontex sent to the Italian government that was leaked to the press made clear that the operational aim of Triton would be "to control irregular migration flows towards the territory of the European Union and to tackle cross border crime" – a clearly security-oriented goal

(Frontex 2014g, 10). While search and rescue activities are mentioned in the document, they appear only marginally and are described as Italy's responsibility.

In this publicised contention regarding the agency's role in saving lives at sea, Frontex's public interventions and press releases presented the agency as committed to fulfilling its duties under international maritime law, i.e. responding to distress calls in the vicinity of its operations, and following instructions by national MRCCs to conduct search and rescue activities on an ad hoc basis. More expansive interpretations of humanitarianism, particularly suggestions that Frontex should conduct operations with the objective of searching and rescuing individuals at sea, were firmly rejected. In the public documents released by Frontex, it is implied that the agency's life-saving activities occur as a side effect of its security-focused joint operations, and take place under the responsibility of member states. At times, security and humanitarian language even seem to merge in the self-representations mobilised within press releases and annual reports, such as in this example: "53 758 migrants (approximately 147 migrants per day on average) were apprehended/rescued during joint sea operations in 2013" (Frontex 2014b, 63). The use of "apprehended/rescued" seems to indicate that in some instances, humanitarian and security languages have become exchangeable in the agency's public documents.

The mainstreaming of humanitarianism and human rights in Frontex's publications has gone hand in hand with a greater emphasis on asylum seekers, who now feature more regularly also outside of their role as "indicators" in Frontex's "risk analyses". In particular, references to the discursive narratives of the "fraudulent asylum seeker" and the "unscrupulous smuggler" have increased recently, and enmesh the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security. As one example of this, the chair of the management board elaborated in his foreword to Frontex's 2013 annual report:

[t]hose in need of protection can only be identified and granted an orderly admission procedure if the EU's external borders are under intensive surveillance. The same applies when it comes to combating human smuggling as a complex, international, unscrupulous and organised business. In order to improve the situation of refugees

sustainably and to fight all aspects of cross-border crime we need to step up and coordinate our cooperation with the relevant countries of origin, the transit of irregular migration and cross-border crime (Frontex 2014b, 3).

While reaffirming the need to protect ‘legitimate’ asylum seekers and refugees, other asylum seekers have repeatedly been portrayed as cunning, strategic, and illegitimate. In July 2014, a news item on Frontex’s website reported trends of the previous year, including “a sharp increase of nationals of the Russian Federation of Chechen origin refused entry and then *using asylum applications* in Poland as a way to enter the EU and then move on to Germany” (Frontex 2014h, my emphasis; see also Frontex 2014b, 19). Similar claims were made in another news item on the “Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis” in 2014: “[w]hen detected, almost all migrants claimed asylum. The *abuse* of visa-free travel through *mostly unfounded* asylum application in the EU remained at the same level as in 2012” (Frontex 2014i, my emphasis; see also Frontex 2014c). Drawing on the widespread narrative of the ‘fraudulent asylum seeker’, applying for asylum is thus portrayed as a strategy to gain access to the EU by “irregular migrants” (rather than by *bona fide* refugees). By associating and partially equating asylum with irregular migration as well as with deceit and abuse, these publications draw on and further consolidate a generalised sense of unease vis-à-vis migration and asylum in Europe (see e.g. Bigo 2002a; Huysmans 2014; Huysmans and Buonfino 2008).

Similarly, publications by Frontex also continued to refer to the narrative of the ‘unscrupulous smuggler’ in justifying its activities in recent years. In relation to the death of 45 individuals, the following statement was attributed to deputy executive director Gil Arias Fernandez: “[t]hese people were put on rubber boats or told to swim or cross the freezing cold river by the facilitators [...]. In fact, an important target of our operation are the criminal facilitation networks who are behind these arrivals” (Frontex 2011o; see also Frontex 2011p, 2012e, 2012f). While irregular migration is constructed as a security threat to member states, the narrative of the ‘unscrupulous smuggler’ shifts the blame for this phenomenon as well as resulting deaths to the facilitators of these journeys. It moreover enables Frontex not only to remain silent

vis-à-vis the more fundamental reasons for irregular migration, but also makes it possible to frame unauthorised border crossers as threats and victims at the same time. Consequently, the discursive narrative positions Frontex simultaneously as a protector of EUropean citizens from outside threats, and as a compassionate rescuer of those seeking to reach EUrope without authorisation. The narrative of the ‘asylum fraudster’ and of the ‘unscrupulous smuggler’ are commonly known among publics in EUrope, and alluding to them allows Frontex’s messages to be instantly understood. They combine concern for the welfare and rights of ‘genuine’ refugees on the one hand with the assertion that ‘fraudsters’ and ‘smugglers’ need to be combatted decisively to protect ‘genuine’ asylum seekers and potential ‘smuggling victims’, and to shield ‘ourselves’ from risks and threats. The narratives thereby draw on the simultaneous articulation of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security. In conclusion, press releases and annual reports released by Frontex between 2011 and 2014 saw the mainstreaming of the portrayal of Frontex as a rescuer and human rights promoter, which was at the same time closely bound up with ideas more traditionally associated with security and law enforcement: staying in and exercising control.

Knowing Frontex through its publications

Seeking to understand Frontex through the representations in its public documents opens up a second perspective on the agency. It allows the analyst to add depth and context to the quantitative overview of particular terms in Frontex’s publications through time, which was provided in the introduction. In doing so, it shows that humanitarianism, human rights, and security have become increasingly interconnected in Frontex’s public documents. In the agency’s early publications, migration was presented primarily as a threat and a risk, and Frontex was portrayed as analysing, anticipating, and managing this risk as well as being ready to quickly respond to unexpected emergencies as they arose. Initial, cautious references to saving lives suggested that Frontex’s security-oriented joint operations had humanitarian side

effects by intercepting and returning individuals at sea. While terms such as “illegal migrants” were gradually phased out in subsequent years, the reports and press releases continued to contribute to the (diffuse and exceptionalist) securitising of unauthorised migration, presenting it both in terms of risks responded to through routine analysis activities and by invoking crises and emergencies. References to human rights were only made from 2008 onwards. Nevertheless, they have become mainstreamed in Frontex’s publications in recent years, being consistently highlighted as a key aspect of the agency’s work.

While the press releases and reports at times highlight one discursive formation in particular, they most often draw on a combination of them. The analysed documents also mobilise the widely known discursive narratives of the ‘asylum fraudster’ and the ‘unscrupulous smuggler’, in which the formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security are tied up with one another. In Frontex’s publications, the three discursive formations have thus become increasingly enmeshed in recent years. As a result of this, the agency is simultaneously constructed as a protector of Europe, a saviour of lives at sea, and a promoter of fundamental rights. Following a loosely Foucauldian approach, the preceding discussion opens up two questions in particular. First, what has enabled the three discursive formations to co-exist in Frontex’s publications, and to become increasingly tied up with each other? Second, what are the effects of their combination in Frontex’s public documents?

In chapter 2, I reflected on the first question, and proposed that the discursive similarities of humanitarianism, human rights, and security create the preconditions for their intertwinement in contemporary European border governance, including in Frontex’s publications. In particular, I argued that the commonalities across the three discursive formations meant that calling for an improved implementation of humanitarian principles and / or human rights did not necessarily constitute a fundamental challenge to dealing with migration as a threat or a risk, and thereby the continuation of Frontex’s practices (including risk analysis and joint operations, among others). As noted, all three discursive formations are intimately bound up with the governance of populations in space, and construct unauthorised border crossers as

'others'. Their similarities make it possible to incorporate references to saving lives and protecting rights in Frontex's publications, while maintaining a conceptualisation of migration as a risk and a threat at the same time.

The second question will be addressed in greater detail in chapter 6. Nevertheless, a few preliminary observations are warranted here. Importantly, Foucault proposed treating discourses "as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972, 49). While his understanding of discourses includes not only linguistic, but also non-linguistic practices, the conceptualisation of discursive practices as productive (rather than merely reflective of an already existing reality) is of great relevance here. Examining changes in Frontex's public documents does not only provide insights into how the language in them has changed over time; the language that is used to describe Frontex's work, borders, and migration simultaneously creates the world the agency is situated in (see Hajer 1993, 44). How mobility is responded to is intimately bound up with how it is perceived and understood, which linguistic practices are central to (see Fischer and Forester 1993, 6). Judith Butler uses the term "discursive performativity" to capture the productive capacity of discourse:

[d]iscursive performativity appears to produce that which it names, to enact its own referent, to name and to do, to name and to make. [...] As a discursive practice (performative "acts" must be repeated to become efficacious), performatives constitute a locus of discursive production. No "act" apart from a regularized and sanctioned practice can wield the power to produce that which it declares (Butler 1993, 107).

As noted already, Frontex's public documents draw on discursive formations that circulate widely in contemporary EUrope. They continuously reiterate already-existing subjectivities and narratives, and are thereby performative. Not only do they (re-)produce particular conceptualisations of migration and mobility, but also, they produce Frontex as a humanitarian, human rights, and security actor. From the perspective of Frontex's public documents, then, Frontex can be known as a (self-proclaimed) saviour of lives, a promoter of fundamental rights, and a protector of EUropean citizens. Chapter 6 will elaborate what the effects of this construction on

Frontex are, as well as how the intertwining of humanitarianism, human rights, and security formations is performative in the European border regime more widely.

There is one last point that needs to be discussed in this section: the preceding analysis does not address the question of intentionality. Importantly, examining the change in the language used in Frontex's public documents alone cannot give a satisfactory answer regarding the motivations of those commissioning, editing, or writing the relevant documents to gradually increase the references made to humanitarianism and human rights. Given the access limitations I faced (as discussed in chapter 3), it would be mere speculation to discuss the motivations underlying the discursive shifts outlined in this section. While having access to internal meetings, discussions, briefings, and documents would undoubtedly have yielded highly valuable insights, some underlying methodological issues would moreover have remained even if access had not been so limited.

In my research, I was interested in discursive shifts over the first decade of Frontex's existence. However, I was only able to conduct interviews once I actively started my doctoral project, i.e. from 2013 onwards. Seeking to establish the motivations of linguistic changes in Frontex's documents retroactively through interview data would have posed a number of difficulties: first, in terms of finding interviewees who would be able to share insights into discussions and decisions taken in Frontex's early years (none of my interviewees had worked for Frontex since its foundation). Second, in terms of adding considerable doubt regarding the accuracy of interviewees' memories and retrospective accounts of organisational change and motivations. Third, seeking to attribute intentionality to interviewees also risks affirming a conceptualisation of the intentional subject as prior to and independent of discourse, which is in tension with the Foucauldian conceptualisation followed in this thesis (Angermüller 2014, 25). Importantly, when analysing the articulation of discursive formations following a Foucault-inspired approach, it is not the aim to understand individual actors' intentions or motivations in making particular utterances or drawing new connections (Foucault 1972, 125). Instead, the focus of analysis is on what makes such connections and transitions between discursive formations possible, on mapping the proximities,

analogies, and symmetries that allow for their exchanges or interplay (Foucault 1972, 161–162). Also from a new institutionalist perspective, identifying singular motivations for linguistic changes within organisations is problematic: as the next chapter will discuss in greater depth, the idea of Frontex as a rational organisation that takes decisions on how to present itself does not live up to scrutiny. Importantly, these limitations do not imply that those working for Frontex have not had particular motivations for actions taken, including linguistic changes. Instead, they problematize the feasibility of clearly separating out and identifying their intentions for the analyst, both from a practical and from a theoretical standpoint.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I offered two perspectives on Frontex, which both render the agency knowable in different ways. While the first one followed other scholars' accounts of Frontex's foundation, the second followed Frontex's annual reports and press releases over the first 10 years of its existence. Both perspectives produce a particular kind of knowledge about the agency. Examining the debates and negotiations leading up to Frontex's foundation allows for understanding the agency as a compromise between diverse actors: Frontex has been established as the answer to a variety of concerns, and continues to be held accountable by actors pursuing different interests. Such a conceptualisation helps to make sense of the coexistence of different rationalities within the agency, and of its ongoing need to negotiate multiple discursive formations. It allows for a less unitary and deterministic view of Frontex's work and narratives, and suggests that its multi-faceted self-representations have changed and evolved partially in response to developments in the wider border regime. Shifts of power relations both among and within EU institutions might have led to a re-consideration of policies and terms used, as more "migration-friendly" actors – most importantly the European Parliament – gained greater influence in recent years, and humanitarianism and human rights became stronger discourses in the border regime overall, as I outlined in the introduction to this thesis.

The second perspective has engaged with the agency's self-representations, and how these changed over the first 10 years of its existence. When examining Frontex's public self-representations over time, the increases in references to search and rescue activities and fundamental rights are remarkable (see introduction). The date boundaries drawn between the three different phases of Frontex's self-representation are to some extent artificial, as the three phases blur into each other. Nevertheless, I showed that Frontex's publications presented the agency very strongly as a security actor in its early years, making no references to human rights and very limited references to saving lives at sea as a result of diverting boats back to their countries of origin until 2008. In the following years this slowly changed, as humanitarianism and human rights began to be incorporated in the agency's public documents, and an entanglement of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in Frontex's self-representation began to emerge through the narrative of Frontex's 'fight' against the 'unscrupulous smuggler' exploiting 'vulnerable migrants'. Over the last years, humanitarianism and human rights were effectively mainstreamed throughout the agency's annual reports and press releases, and a combination of humanitarianism, human rights, and security emerged in Frontex's self-representations in that period.

Importantly, the incorporation of humanitarianism and human rights did not challenge the fundamentally security-centred representation of Frontex. While Frontex's press releases and reports have increasingly drawn on humanitarian and human rights language, Frontex continued to be portrayed as a security actor, ready to respond to urgent threats as well as constantly calculating and managing risks. The incorporation of human rights and humanitarianism did not pose a challenge to ongoing portrayals of migration as a risk and a threat due to the similarities across the discursive formations (see chapter 2). Instead, these similarities allowed for the intertwining of the formations in key narratives employed by the agency, such as that of the 'unscrupulous smuggler' and of the 'asylum fraudster'.

Chapter 5: Frontex from an Organisational Perspective

The previous chapter provided two different perspectives on Frontex, looking at the agency through the history of its foundation on the one hand, and through its published documents on the other hand. While both perspectives provide valuable insights regarding Frontex's negotiation of humanitarianism, human rights, and security, each also has its limitations. As problematized already in chapter 4, the account of Frontex's foundation simplifies the institutional actors involved, depicting them as unitary, rational agents. In addition, it stops short of engaging with Frontex's own role as an actor within a contentious environment of diverse stakeholders. Tracing Frontex's public documents through time, on the other hand, is necessarily partial in that it relies only on the written end results of complex internal processes and decision-making. While it can be argued that these outputs constitute an important part of Frontex's organisational discourse, and indeed the discursive landscape of the EUropean border regime more generally, they also construct Frontex as a unitary, rational actor that responds appropriately to ever-changing patterns of migration and mobility through search and rescue activities, fundamental rights training, as well as risk analysis and joint operations.

In order to probe this construction of Frontex, this chapter will complement the preceding perspectives with a third way of knowing Frontex. Drawing on findings from interviews, participant observations, and informal conversations, I move beyond Frontex's official self-representation vis-à-vis the public. Importantly, the diverse forms of engagement I had with those working for and with the agency in different locations complicate its portrayal as a unitary, rational actor. Instead, these encounters suggest that Frontex can also be understood as a fragmented (or decoupled) organisation situated in a highly contested field, and subject to diverse and at times contradictory pressures from the outside. This relates, of course, to the history of the agency's foundation as it was presented in the previous chapter. Rather than seeing Frontex as the product or compromise of its stakeholders' interests, it however allows

for a more nuanced conceptualisation of how those working for and with the agency portray and negotiate the agency's positioning in the EUropean border regime.

As I discussed in chapter 3, my access to Frontex remained limited throughout my research, and insights presented here offer glimpses into the agency rather than a fully-fledged organisational analysis. While I was only able to spend short periods of time in Frontex's headquarters, at Frontex events, and in joint operations in Bulgaria and Italy, the data I could gather in these dispersed locations and with diverse people meaningfully complements and complicates the data presented in the previous chapter, providing the additional perspective of the agency through the accounts of those working for and with Frontex. In the following, I will introduce how humanitarianism, human rights, and security were negotiated in different locales – in Frontex's bureaucracy on the one hand, and at 'the borders' on the other hand – and will point to contradictions and incoherencies in self-representations between these places. After outlining my findings, I will draw on new institutionalism to discuss discrepancies and continuities across the locales. Most importantly, I will argue that Frontex is a highly fragmented organisation, and that inconsistencies between different parts of the organisation reflect inconsistencies and contradictions in its wider environment.

In doing so, I rely on 16 semi semi-structured interviews: six of these I conducted with staff members in December 2013, an interview with a management board member in January 2014, and a skype interview with an additional staff member in September 2014. An interview with an NGO member of Frontex's Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights in September 2013 further informs the following analysis. This is complemented by fieldwork in Bulgaria and Italy: in Bulgaria, I conducted formal interviews with four guest officers and had numerous informal conversation with others, who did not want to or were not authorised to speak more formally. I could not audio record these interviews or conversations, but took handwritten notes throughout. In Italy, I conducted three formal interviews and went for dinner with all individuals affiliated with the Frontex-operation in the city I visited, talking informally with them. I could audio-record two of the three interviews, and took handwritten notes of the third interview and informal conversations. Lastly, I draw on observations and

informal conversations during the agency's 47th management board meeting in February 2014 (including informal conversations during breaks, and over dinner and drinks following the meeting), during the European Day for Border Guards in May 2013. As discussed in chapter 3, relying on informal conversations always raises ethical concerns: while all those I spoke with in informal contexts were aware of my identity as a researcher, I cannot be certain that they always fully understood that also information provided informally might contribute to my research. As such, no direct quotes obtained in informal conversations will be shared here. In order to preserve the interviewees' anonymity, I will moreover not rely on the pronouns "he" or "she" in the following discussion. Given that this might make it possible to reconstruct who the speaker was for those who have a broad overview of who I had permission to interview, I chose to use the gender-neutral pronoun "they" instead.

What will become apparent in the following discussion is that those working for and with Frontex drew on the discursive formations of humanitarian, human rights, and security to varying degrees. Whether their motivations in doing so while speaking to me were mostly strategic, or whether they genuinely believed in the narratives they mobilised cannot be determined here (see chapter 4). What is important, however, is that interviewees were able to draw on and combine the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in their accounts of their work and Frontex's role, and did so in varying ways – and without prompting – throughout the interviews.

Frontex's self-portrayal by staff and management

When speaking to Frontex management and staff, a relatively uniform organisational discourse emerged. Interviewees drew on humanitarianism, human rights, and security in speaking about their work, Frontex, and the importance of EU border controls. They invoked a continuum of threats in relation to migration, ranging from the overburdening of the asylum system to terrorism, drug dealing, rape, the shadow economy, bank robbery, murder, counterfeiting, human trafficking, and weapon

smuggling. At the same time, interviewees framed their work as risk management, and presented Frontex as intelligence-driven and as promoting best practices. Without prompting, almost all interviewees also invoked search and rescue as well as fundamental rights as central to the work that Frontex was doing. In this section, I will briefly outline how staff and management mobilised each of the discursive formations in turn and illustrate this with quotes, before then contrasting these narratives with those mobilised by the guest officers I spoke with in Frontex operations.

Security: migration as a threat and a risk

Among Frontex staff and management, migration was frequently linked with (organised) crime and terrorism and portrayed as presenting a variety of threats. Particularly when I asked about the importance of border management for the European Union, but also in comments about the role of Frontex more generally, these associations appeared. One staff member for instance explained:

if you are a UK citizen living in Edinburgh, you don't want someone coming from Lithuania to come by flight, without control, bringing arms, making a bank robbery, killing two people and going back to Lithuania safe. You don't want someone coming from, from a specific country, being trained in a camp, come back and then, having the training, put a bomb in the metro station and make it explode. You don't want people to earn money in the UK working illegally in, in a restaurant and then sending the money somewhere to finance some illegal activities, drug trafficking, or, or for buying, purchasing drugs or for trafficking human beings. You don't want people who come with the contagious diseases to pass the border without any... There are various dimensions of border control (FR4).

As this statement illustrates, migration was associated with a continuum of threats to EU citizens, EU member states, and the EU itself (see Bigo 2002a). Reflecting the breadth of this continuum, threats were at times framed in highly individualised terms – “how would you feel if your daughter got raped and you only have this open border and the criminal can leave Europe and you'll never find him again?” (FR1) – and at other times related to the functioning of the state or social as a whole – “everybody will come here. And it will be a total disorder so to say. And disorder in the bad sense, of like, not having sufficient jobs or food or anything” (FR3). They were also bound

up with the functioning of Schengen, which was portrayed as embodying as well as necessitating the solidarity the EU was relying on. Frontex and its coordination of border controls was portrayed as a key “solidarity instrument” (FR1) that supported member states in keeping the threat of irregular migration at bay. The agency was also presented as law enforcement actor, implementing the rules that Schengen member states had agreed on, in particular the Schengen Borders Code. Both law and order as well as security and threat discourses emerged across all interviews with Frontex staff and management.

At times, the presentation of migration as a threat was bound up with notions of urgency. As one staff member explained, “Frontex can also deploy, let’s say, urgent, urgently a set of people, assets, in an area which is experiencing sudden problems. And an unexpected level of threat” (FR4). The capacity of Frontex to speedily respond to an unforeseen “threat” was emphasised, which is in line with interpretations of security as requiring a readiness to urgently respond to essentially unpredictable threats. On the other hand, staff members also invoked understandings of security as risk management, presenting their work as routine and cyclical:

we get intelligence and so on, and we try to provide knowledge about how the operation is going, what are the findings, if we have to readjust the deployment, if we have to readjust the way of the, the operational response to specific new trends. And then, in the end of these operations, we support also the, let’s say the final evaluation of the operation, each operation. Lesson learned, best practices, problems, improvements, and so on. In a circle that, let’s say, looks to learn from, from the operations for the future (FR4).

This understanding of risk analyses and operations as building on each other was framed by FR2 as running “almost in automated mode: member states already know that in this period of the year we are going to discuss with them what they will be able to provide next year, [...] so everything is already in a cycle mode.” In this framing, the focus was thus not on urgent responses to unpredictable threats, but on routine monitoring and planning ahead. Frontex was presented as a service provider, offering “additional support” to member states and European institutions, in particular “intelligence-driven” planning and preparation. Throughout the interviews, the

importance of risk analyses, best practices, capacity building, trainings, evaluations and learning was highlighted.

In line with this emphasis on managing risks, several interviewees remarked that Frontex's focus was not on stopping irregular migration, but on detection and identification:

well, the importance of border control is, let's put it this way: I believe that no one would allow to enter in his own home somebody that you should not know. And this is the key point. We believe that all the people that will cross the EU borders legally or illegally should be identified (FR7).

There's also the main idea to make sure that people who travel legally should be able to cross the border as smoothly as possible. And those that are not legal travellers should be found among the travellers as easy as possible (FR5).

Concerns around detection and identification are closely bound up with a conceptualisation of security as risk management, and of migration overall as a risk to be calculated and managed (see Aradau and van Munster 2008; Huysmans 2014). This focus on identifying individuals rather than necessarily stopping them stands in contrast to common portrayals of Frontex as seeking to stop and return people, or even waging “war” against them. Rationalities and technologies of risk, however, render the population of border crossers in its entirety suspect, positing them to be in need of profiling, identification, and filtering. FR5 referred to the importance of filtering rather clearly, emphasising the need to let ‘legitimate’ travellers pass smoothly while detecting ‘illegitimate’ travellers among border crossers as efficiently as possible (see Bigo et al. 2011).

Frontex staff and management thus framed migration both as a continuum of threats that might require urgent responses, and as a risk to be managed and prepared for (see also Neal 2009, 349). Two staff members reflected on this coexistence of an urgency-based and a more long-term, risk-based approach within Frontex. FR2 emphasised the novelty of risk-based approaches in EU border governance, arguing that this was something “the agency introduced in the traditional methods of border control”, and that it constituted “a way of better managing not only the resources, but also the real needs at the border.” FR1 emphasised developments in Frontex over time, arguing that

we're becoming more, I think, less of an emergency help to more of a part of a system. What the system in the end will be we shall see, it's difficult to say today. But you know, EUROSUR is an existing system. There is a new information exchange platform and we're part of it. And we provide the member states with very specific products. So it's, we still, you know, rush to the border to help when there is a crisis, when there is a large flow of migrants, but I think there is more, there is the, we develop things that are more long-term, less emergency (FR1).

Clearly, staff members were aware of the coexistence of both modes of operation, urgency-based responses which were bound up with a perception of migration as a continuum of threats (or exceptionalist securitising) on the one hand, and risk-based approaches focusing on long-term planning, risk minimisation, detection and identification (or diffuse securitising) on the other. Their coexistence indicates the existence of various rationalities within the agency, which might complement as well as contradict one another at different moments in time. With one of the major concerns among staff members at the time of my fieldwork being the limited financial budget for the agency despite its increasing responsibilities, it is not difficult to imagine that tensions around the prioritisation of these means for urgent responses vs. long-term preparedness might arise. At other times, both approaches feed into one another and coexist harmoniously: as staff members explained, urgent interventions produce intelligence that is fed back into Frontex's "risk analyses", which in turn contribute to improving operational responses, including "rapid interventions". The reasons for and effects of this coexistence of modes of securitising within Frontex will be further reflected on in the third part of this chapter.

Humanitarianism

Apart from security formations, Frontex staff and management also drew on the discursive formations of humanitarianism and human rights. In most of the interviews I conducted, research participants introduced the topic of search and rescue at sea without prompting from my side. While they emphasised that the agency was doing its best to rescue people in distress at sea, they at the same time stressed that Frontex remained a security organisation. Repeatedly, interviewees asserted that "Frontex is

not there to solve the problem” (FR4), that “I don’t think we want to become an SAR agency” (FR6), “we are not a search and rescue organisation” (FR1), “Frontex has no mandate or competence to coordinate search and rescue cooperation” (FR2), and “Frontex is not a search and rescue agency. It’s a border agency” (FR3). While they emphasised that those participating in Frontex operations would aid a boat in distress if they received requests by a member state to do so, interviewees insisted that this did not mean that Frontex could be said to coordinate search and rescue operations. In addition, they spent considerable time explaining how difficult it was to see small boats in the vast area of the Mediterranean Sea, especially in bad weather conditions:

[w]hen you have a boat in the middle of the sea and the, you have seven wind force and the boat is overcrowded and there are waves between 4 and 7 meters, you cannot even approach the boat. Because if you get close to a boat, you can create the conditions for capsizing or you cannot transport people because they can die. You know, putting a person, a pregnant woman or an old person or a child on a rope on the sea which is moving like this between boat A and boat B, one being ten meters high, it’s really, really bad. [...] Sometimes, you know, the migrants put themselves really in bad conditions (FR4).

As this quote illustrates, some interviewees were at least partially blaming the travellers themselves for the dangerous situations they found themselves in. Others were more sympathetic, and pointed to the strict visa regime as barring whole categories of people from travelling to EUrope legally. Regardless of whether they apportioned blame to the travellers or not, staff members seemed to feel a need to explain and justify Frontex’s actions at sea. They pointed not only to the practical difficulties of saving lives at sea, but also insisted that it was the responsibility of member states to coordinate search and rescue operations.

In the interviews, a fine line between emphasising that Frontex was doing everything it could and had saved tens of thousands of people, and pointing out that search and rescue was not something the agency was responsible for emerged. Frontex staff members endorsed a ‘rule-of-law’ humanitarianism, positively emphasising Frontex’s adherence to international legal frameworks, while at the same time guarding themselves against criticism based on a more expansive reading of humanitarian duties. Frontex’s negotiations with Italy over the replacement of Mare Nostrum in

2014, which I discussed in the previous chapter, are an interesting example of this balancing act. Speaking to one of the Frontex staff members involved in these ongoing discussions in September 2014, it became clear that there was an ongoing struggle between Italy and Frontex over the agency's activities in the Mediterranean:

they want one thing which we cannot deliver, so this is the basic line [...]. But they are constantly trying to push for that, as much as possible. But we cannot. It's not a question of negotiating. On that thing we cannot negotiate, because we cannot. We cannot do what is Mare Nostrum doing right now. It's not our role and it's not our activities and we're not supposed to be doing that, so this is the end. We will not do that (FR7).

In addition to concerns about overstressing Frontex's mandate, some staff and management members also suggested that Mare Nostrum might be a 'pull factor', or embolden facilitators to send people on the sea journey without adequate resources. When asked whether there might be tensions between search and rescue and border security objectives, interviewees however denied this to be the case. Instead, they framed search and rescue activities as temporarily suspending border controls, which would then resume as soon as the rescued individuals were disembarked somewhere. As FR2 elaborated, for instance: "when you are at sea, the first priority is to save lives. Then you process immigration as you should afterwards. I mean first you save the lives, then you take a look." FR1 emphasised that better surveillance could lead to earlier detection and thus a higher chance of successful search and rescue operations, emphasising how both objectives could work together. Again, this points to interviewees' commitment to a rule-of-law interpretation of humanitarianism and search and rescue obligations, fulfilling but not exceeding international legal requirements. While a more pro-active approach to saving lives – i.e. conducting operations with search and rescue rather than border security objectives – was explicitly rejected, Frontex's participation in nationally coordinated search and rescue operations was positively emphasised and not viewed as problematic by those interviewed.

Also beyond search and rescue activities, references to saving and protecting people on the move were made. When asked whether Frontex's risk analyses took the risk

that travellers faced into account, FR4 explained that this was indeed the case, and pointed to a potential need to ‘prevent’ departures in case of particularly bad weather for the individuals’ own good. FR7 noted that illegalised people could more easily be exploited once they arrived in EUrope, and that identifying them would therefore help authorities to “protect” them. Relatedly, also the narrative of ‘unscrupulous smugglers’ who exploit vulnerable people was mobilised in the headquarters: similar to Frontex’s public documents, staff members portrayed the agency as protecting people from exploitation and violence. They linked migratory movements with organised crime, and the risks people faced on their journeys to EUrope with the unscrupulous behaviour of facilitators:

I don’t know if you saw, there was a boat last week that sank, they were forced by the, this facilitators that are, on purpose they sank the boat with the migrants. And this is something, you know - this is really the issue at this point, you know? [...] Because it’s not like we are against, we as Frontex are against migrants. Here, no one is against migrants. They are not criminals, they are people they are trying to look for their lives and some of them escaping and this is not our target. [...] one of our main focus is facilitators. These are the people that we are very, very much interested in. We are putting a huge effort trying to detect, identify the facilitators and try as much as possible to bring them to justice (FR7).

Again, emphasising the exploitation of individuals by facilitators allows for the construction of an image of Frontex as one of protecting individuals from harm both by rescuing them when in distress and by fighting people smuggling. Understanding those seeking to cross into EUrope without authorisation both as victims and threats enabled Frontex staff to present the agency’s work as protecting EUropean citizens and people on the move, while upholding law and order at the same time.

Fundamental Rights

Contrary to the more cautious negotiation of Frontex’s stance towards search and rescue, the importance of fundamental rights was emphasised and endorsed unambiguously throughout the interviews, and was frequently juxtaposed to what staff members framed as unjustified or misguided criticism from the outside. FR5 for instance asserted: “as you might know, Frontex has for long been pinpointed by

different nongovernmental organisations for not respecting fundamental rights and things like that. Which is far from true and actually, the full respect of fundamental rights has a very special position within Frontex.” Interviewees emphasised that Frontex took human rights very seriously, and that the criticism the agency received was largely misdirected: in Frontex operations, fundamental rights had not been violated. After stating this, FR3 however also pointed out that Frontex was in a transition phase, gradually ensuring that fundamental rights are being respected in all its activities and at all times.

Most interviewees emphasised that already before the introduction of the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights (Forum) and the Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO), fundamental rights had been very important to Frontex. At the same time, they acknowledged that awareness of fundamental rights had increased since then, as they had “been highlighted in a clearer way” (FR5). Many remarked that initially, attitudes towards the Forum and the Fundamental Rights Officer had been cautious. I was told that there had been fears by Frontex staff that they would be told that what they were doing was wrong, but that instead, a constructive and cooperative approach prevailed. Particularly FR2 praised the day-to-to cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Officer, and also other interviewees commented favourably on her and the Forum’s work. Those staff members directly involved with the Consultative Forum also assessed its work positively. At the same time, they emphasised that trust needed to be built within the agency regarding the work of the Forum and the Fundamental Rights Officer: “you also need to consider that we are in an agency, you need to kind of build mutual trust. So... and this is a process that cannot happen you know overnight. So you need to allow some time to everybody. But what, certainly I mean, I’m confident, because I could see really an extremely constructive approach” (FR6). Overall, it seemed that Frontex staff members were well aware of the necessity of embracing fundamental rights publicly, while also acknowledging that mainstreaming them in practice was still work in progress.

As noted, Frontex staff asserted that human rights were not violated during the agency’s own operations, and emphasised Frontex’s promotion of best practices and

the setting of standards: “wherever Frontex is it should be the highest standard, I think that’s pretty much understood by everybody, in terms of fundamental rights especially” (FR3). Importantly, interviewees were quick to distance Frontex from allegations of abuse by border guards outside of its missions. There seemed to be some frustration among them with the negative press abuses in some member states entailed for Frontex. Countering this, a member of Frontex’s management board and the NGO representative I spoke with emphasised the possibility of Frontex operations leading to the reporting of human rights violations, and thus human rights improvements. In addition, I was told that the Greek representative in Frontex’s management board in particular had come under increasing pressure in board meetings because of the problematic human rights situation in Greece.

Further illustrating this dynamic, two national delegates were asked to explain incidents which left people who had attempted to cross their respective national borders dead during the management board meeting I attended. When speaking to me informally, other delegates expressed their shock and disbelief regarding these states’ practices, indicating that there exist diverging standards of acceptability regarding violence against border-crossers across EUropean states, and between (some) EUropean states and Frontex. Importantly, discussions of human rights standards as well as the singling out of particular member states were deeply tied up with a questioning of standards of ‘EUropeanness’ of countries in EUrope’s periphery, particularly Greece and Bulgaria. This came to the fore a number of times in the interviews, when participants referred to the different heritage and training of border guards in EUrope, lauding the more long-standing traditions of policing in countries such as Germany or Sweden. Overall, according to interviewees, Frontex had played a key role in improving the human rights situation in e.g. Greece over time.

Summing up: Frontex’s organisational discourse

Despite some nuances and different emphases between the accounts of different interviewees, a relatively uniform organisational discourse emerged among members of Frontex staff and management I spoke with. They framed migration as a threat to

be ready to respond to at short notice, while also emphasising the novelty Frontex had to offer to ‘traditional’ conceptions of border security through its intelligence-based approach. In terms of humanitarianism, interviewees cautioned against excessive expectations from the outside and emphasised the limited mandate of the agency. As noted, they embraced a rule-of-law reading of humanitarianism, while rejecting wider interpretations of humanitarian duties vis-à-vis those in need. This emphasis on the rule of law rather than wider, moral concerns fits with the portrayal of the agency as a law enforcement organisation, aiming to make sure that legal rules are applied: in EU and international law, search and rescue obligations are firmly enshrined. In addition, also fundamental rights are an integral part of the legal framework Frontex is bound by. While staff members acknowledged that Frontex’s commitment to them in practice was still ‘work in progress’ and of relatively recent origins, the growing emphasis on fundamental rights fits together with a wider narrative of Frontex as an agency that promotes the rule of law, best practices, uniform standards, and a common culture of border guarding across EUrope.

Guest Officers’ understandings of Frontex

As Frontex’s work is not only planned and carried out at the headquarters, but in part also implemented through its operations, I visited operation Poseidon Land at the Bulgarian-Turkish border in spring 2014, and operation Hermes in southern Italy in summer 2014. When interviewing guest officers within Frontex operations at the Bulgarian-Turkish border and in Sicily, I realised quickly that the people I spoke with were not using the organisational discourse I had heard in the headquarters. As I will outline below, guest officers and seconded officers articulated highly diverse interpretations of their work and of Frontex.

Before exploring how the discursive formations of security, human rights, and humanitarianism were mobilised by those participating in Frontex operations, it is important to note that the guest officers I interviewed normally work in their own countries, and are deployed to Frontex operations for only one to three months at a

time. They are under the command of the “host member state”, i.e. the country they are deployed to, during that time. Seconded guest officers serve with Frontex for up to six months, and contrarily to guest officers can be sent to several joint operations in a row. Both types of officers in both research locations explained their decision to participate in a Frontex operation similarly, noting that it allowed them to understand another country’s border policing better, learn new practices, get to know new people, places, and languages, and meet colleagues which then would be valuable contacts during their daily work back in their home countries. Some also pointed to financial incentives and to benefits for their career prospects at home when spending some time in police missions abroad.

Unequivocally, all officers expressed that they felt rather distanced from Frontex, and were at times hesitant to respond to my questions about the agency at all. When asked about changes in Frontex over time, one guest officer said:

I think that’s very difficult to answer, because, me my little role, a small place there, I don’t know if I can see the big picture in that, that sense. I have not really felt very big change in my contact with Frontex and how I see Frontex from my starting till the end (laughs). But my contact is not very strong, you know?

They also articulated doubts about the usefulness of their role in the operation: “I think, why this mission, what can we gain from it. That’s what I think. And sometimes I have difficulties to really... understand myself.” Throughout, officers expressed that Frontex was “far away” from them in their everyday work, that they had not been in touch with the agency a lot before or after the operation, that they had not paid much attention to it, or that Frontex simply did not play a role in their everyday work at home. Overall, the officers expressed that they felt rather disconnected from Frontex and did not always know much about the agency. This distance and disconnect will be further explored in the last part of this chapter.

Bulgaria

When speaking to guest officers close to the Bulgarian-Turkish land border, both human rights and humanitarianism seemed to be virtually absent. Officers focused on the need to “catch the bad guys”, and migration was framed as a threat which needed to be controlled as close to the border as possible. Otherwise, “migrants” would travel on and would be increasingly difficult to “catch”. According to one guest officer, one of the biggest problems in the EU were “migrants”: “they’re here, they are making problems, they are involved in all kinds of criminal activities and so on.” They then said “we want as few [migrants] as possible.” Their colleague interjected, saying that “generally, I’m sure we don’t consider them as potential criminals. I’m sure it must be hard in someone’s life that he decides to leave one’s land.” They added though that the globe was huge and not everyone could live in Europe. This is why borders existed. They appeared older and more senior than their colleague (judging from the amount of stars on their uniform), and redirected the conversation several times during the interview, relativizing rather crude statements regarding migration by their younger colleague and asking me to not “misunderstand”, as both of them had nothing against migration. People only had to enter the EU legally, and this was what Frontex was there to ensure. The dynamics between both officers suggested that the more senior border guard was aware of certain limits as to what was acceptable to say about people on the move towards an outsider like myself. They did not express disagreement with their colleague, but intervened and qualified the other’s statements repeatedly to reassure me that neither of them had a problem with those who sought to cross EU borders as such.

Throughout the interviews and informal conversations I had when at the Bulgarian-Turkish border, the focus remained entirely on security and control concerns. Only when specifically asked about criticisms of Frontex did one officer informally comment briefly that Frontex was “taking care” of people on the move and that for the agency, human rights were central. When enquiring about potential changes in Frontex’s guidelines for the joint operations, a guest officer said they had not noticed any such changes in the “six to seven” operations they had participated in. Most of the

officers I spoke with were “surveillance experts”, using thermovision cameras and other equipment to detect individuals crossing into Bulgaria, and then alerting the Bulgarian authorities who would “take the necessary steps.” In my reflective notes at the time, I noted that I felt a reluctance to speak openly among guest officers, whose answers to my questions were often rather short. I expressed an uncertainty whether this was due to them being cautious and holding back particular views or thoughts, or due to them feeling that they did not have much to respond to my questions on Frontex. I also wondered whether the relative absence of humanitarian concerns among the officers I met might have been connected to the fact that I was visiting a land operation, where numbers of deaths are relatively low. In order to speak to officers involved in a sea border operation, I decided to visit operation Hermes in southern Italy.

Italy

In Sicily, a somewhat different and very diverse picture emerged. The three officers I interviewed expressed starkly differing perceptions about their work and the context they were working in. In contrast to the surveillance experts I had interviewed in Bulgaria, I primarily spoke to guest officers working as debriefers in Italy, i.e. those responsible for interviewing individuals after their arrival in Europe to gather intelligence about their motivations, routes, and facilitators. Contrary to the officers in Bulgaria, they had direct and often quite intense contact with those arriving. While the officers’ different narratives cannot be said to be representative of Frontex guest officers overall, they provide insights into the breadth of positions and interpretations among those implementing Frontex operations. For this reason, I will briefly outline each of their positioning in turn.

One officer was invoking an image of migration as a stark threat and a danger, of travellers who lie, cheat, and carry diseases such as Ebola and Scabies into the EU. They did not express any kind of sympathy or compassion towards them. Instead, they advocated summary returns of those arriving to the countries they had travelled from as the only ‘real solution’ to the growing numbers of arrivals, and suggested that it was people’s own fault if they found themselves in situations of distress, after deciding to

enter unsafe boats without appropriate equipment. In their view, Italy's Mare Nostrum operation was not saving people, but instead "aiding and abetting illegal immigration", which was a crime. The scenario they described was thus entirely centred on a security perspective, portraying migration as a continuum of threats, without any mentioning of humanitarian or human rights concerns.

The second officer expressed more understanding for those fleeing poverty and violence. They mobilised both risk management and threat-focused discourses, for instance pointing to the need to harmonise procedures, learn from best practices, make cooperation more efficient, and find the right level of migration to benefit EU member states: „it must be regulated in a way so we can have a certain level of system for people staying, living in our society.” They moreover maintained that “illegal” migration was a “huge problem”, that “Europe” wanted “to stop this flow”, and that the fact that migration was not regulated strictly enough was a threat to member states’ welfare systems. During the interview, the officer repeatedly linked migration and crime, and stated that in their country, international crime had increased to new record levels since the creation of the Schengen zone. At the same time, they also drew on humanitarianism, speaking in particular about the protection needs of Syrians and the dangers of irregular sea crossings. Towards the end of explaining the need to limit irregular migration, they said:

and it's a little bit heart-breaking as well. Because we are talking about people here. That's what I think is a little bit difficult. Here we talk about people who are not really doing something wrong. Normally in my job back home I, people do bad things and I arrest them or... And here the, these type of immigrants, they haven't done much wrong. Okay, they broke the border, they illegally entered Schengen, okay, but that's it. [...] and they have a difficult situation, many of them. You realise how unfair the world is. And I, me and maybe you too are one of the lucky ones. In the big picture.

Speaking about their understanding of those on the move, the officer reflected also on their own privilege. As in the headquarters, they combined security and humanitarian discourse positions in their accounts of Frontex and EUropean border controls, but – contrary to there – did not mention human rights at all. When I specifically asked about the changing role of human rights, they said that since they began to be involved with

Frontex in 2010, human rights had been an integral part of the trainings and briefings provided. They went on to reflect on their own experiences in Frontex operations, and explained that while they were aware of human rights complaints that had been made, they did not actually know what Frontex did when receiving reports about “serious incidents.” Similarly to what I had heard from an NGO staff member and Frontex management, the officer nevertheless suggested that Frontex might have a beneficial effect on the human rights situation in EUrope: “but in a way I think Frontex maybe can be a good thing, that these things would never have been reported. Maybe in any channel.” In their account, the officer thus carefully negotiated humanitarianism, human rights, and security, while also expressing some uncertainty and distance vis-à-vis Frontex and its responses to potential abuses. They seemed to occupy a somewhat ambivalent position towards the agency and EUropean cooperation more widely, emphasising its potential and necessity on the one hand, and expressing cautious doubt as to its practices and efficiency on the other hand.

The account of the third officer in Italy differed starkly from this and all other guest officers’ accounts. Throughout the interview, this officer made clear that their primary desire was to help people, and that they trusted those they interviewed. They explained how they would do small favours for recent arrivals, by for instance sending WhatsApp messages to their families to tell them that they were alive: “sometimes I write ‘please don’t call back, because this is not me, this is a friend from, from Europe.’ Anyway, they call, you know (*laughs*). And I have half of Syria calling on my phone.” The officer shared several individuals’ stories with me, highlighting the violence and horror their interviewees had lived through before reaching Europe. Throughout, they emphasised that they understood and respected people’s decisions to leave and come to Europe, and that these people had not come voluntarily. One recent story seemed to have moved them in particular, and it was the first they told me:

one of my goal is to, that they could see, they were able to see that we are equals. You know? Just only this situation that in his country makes them to be hidden in a boat and running away and trying to jump over Italy to get to another country in the North of Europe and my point is that they don’t feel like they are an inferior, inferiority, you know? That we are equals. [...] with this guy I spent almost 5 hours talking to him. I

offered, he was very busy with his child and I offered him help. You know, I, what you need, I will give you, I will try to obtain for you. [...] And he told me that when he came to the shore, the facilitators told them that they were able to carry on all their belongings, and when they came to the shore, in the last moment, before they're going in to the boat, the facilitators [said]: 'no, you cannot go through. You need to leave all, all in the shore.' And I saw him that he was carrying, carrying two old [*inaudible*] like a laptop suitcase, but full, you know, and I asked him 'but yes I saw you with, with...' 'No Alex²⁰, this is milk. I left all and I try, I get just only the important things. It's milk for my sons and that's all.' And two Quran books, because they are Sunnis. And for me it's very, very, you know, we live in this, in this society consumism and capitalist, and we take care about some things. But they teach you a lot of things. So that's the point. Maybe for those things, sometimes I think I really help them. [...] Sometimes, two years ago, one guy has told me, you are talking like two hours or three hours. [...] And he told me, 'Alex, I will remember you for the rest of my life.'

At this point, the officer took a long break and seemed to struggle with tears. Overall, it seemed that they were genuinely moved by the stories of those they were working with.²¹ When explaining their role as a debriefer, they made clear that it allowed them to reassure new arrivals and offer them a "smile and a welcome". Initially, I was puzzled as to how this declared desire to help travellers fit together with working in a position that meant gathering information used to further impede these same people from arriving in EUrope. When I asked if the information they collected was not used to reinforce border controls the officer agreed, without seemingly seeing a contradiction between this and their desire to 'help' those who tried to cross borders without authorisation. Later on, they said that they understood the role of Frontex not as stopping people from coming to EUrope, but as being prepared for them and identifying them. In their explanation of their work, they drew on humanitarianism to justify the need for operations in the Mediterranean, arguing that a lack of surveillance meant high risks for those crossing, whose deaths would never be known about:

and that's what's, what is I think, that, in my opinion, what is the main task of Frontex. To try and go one step in advance. To avoid those kind of tragedies. Because most of people that works in this has very, a very good feeling about this, you know. They believe in the work they are doing, even the migrants told me they are very professional. They [say] 'you can see on his face, that from the heart, they want to

²⁰ The interviewee's name has been changed.

²¹ Similar emotional reactions were also found by Aas and Gundhus (2015) when speaking to Norwegian police officers involved in Frontex operations.

save us. It's not like in other places, 'they are paying me to do this.' They want', the migrants say this. And I think it's, it's one of the properties of Frontex.

In the officer's representation of Frontex, also their colleagues' motivation was to save people. In doing so, they portrayed the agency as a truly humanitarian organisation, bringing together individuals prepared to save and assist people in distress, and conducting surveillance for this reason. As in all interviews I conducted in Italy, the officer spoke about Italy's Mare Nostrum operation as well, describing it like their colleagues as a 'pull factor'. This officer portrayed the existence of Mare Nostrum as a dilemma – if the operation was stopped now, many more people would die, as they relied on the presence of the Italian navy and coastguard in the Mediterranean. If it was continued, more and more people would arrive in EUrope, which the officer portrayed as problematic as well. It was at this point, towards the very end of the interview, that the officer brought up security concerns in relation to irregular arrivals for the first time:

sometimes things happens. And maybe in five years somebody will explode a bomb maybe in Copenhagen and all people will say who was this guy, from where he came, why the authorities didn't check who was this guy? Because there are hundred of thousand of people coming. And we need to control this, we need to know who is coming and where is he going.

They thus portrayed those arriving as potentially including terrorists, who would need to be identified by the state – thereby drawing on the risk management discourse present also among Frontex's staff and management. Primarily, however, the quotes included in this section serve to show the divergence of this officer's framing from those of the other guest officers, and Frontex's organisational discourse. While drawing on the same discursive formations of humanitarianism and risk management, the officer strongly and consistently foregrounded humanitarian concerns. In doing so, they presented one end of a spectrum of highly diverse self-representations guest officers in Frontex operations provided in informal conversations as well as formalised interviews. As this part of the chapter illustrates, Frontex's organisational discourse was only ever partially reflected in the accounts of officers I spoke with in Frontex operations. Moreover, there seemed to be no overarching unity among the

representations officers shared with me, and I remained deeply puzzled as to the heterogeneity of their positioning vis-à-vis humanitarianism, human rights, and security discursive formations after my visits of operations Poseidon and Hermes.²²

Theoretical reflections

Rather than conceptualising Frontex as a unitary actor – as tends to be the case in critical security and border studies – the divergences and inconsistency identified in the previous sections make clear that it is important to take a closer look at Frontex’s internal dynamics. As explained in chapter 1, it is here that new institutionalism can make a valuable contribution to critical security studies. Analysing the relationships between organisations and their environments, new institutionalist accounts have shown that rather than following one goal or rationality, organisational dynamics tend to be more complex and at times contradictory. As Andrew Neal noted already in 2009, this is true also for Frontex: “the agency performs many roles, and these do not conform to a single overarching logic” (Neal 2009, 346). Accordingly, this last part of the chapter will draw on new institutionalism to make sense of the divergences described, and present a more nuanced analysis of Frontex as a fragmented, loosely coupled, and partially contradictory organisation.

Organisations and their environments

New institutionalist approaches to organisational behaviour emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and are particularly interested in the relationship between organisations and their environments (Scott 2014; Scott and Meyer 1994b). New institutionalist analysis holds that organisations perceive themselves to be dependent

²² Given that I only visited two joint operations, and could conduct formal interviews with only 7 individuals, I am not able to identify patterns in the differences between officers’ accounts. Whether their role within the joint operation, their nationality, their gender, or a range of other factors might have influenced their narratives of migration and their work cannot be determined based on the data I collected.

on their environment. Often, how organisations are perceived from the outside matters profoundly to them, as they depend on resources such as money, labour, and materials from their environment for their survival. In addition, “the organization’s existence must be accepted by the environment; its operations must not, for instance, be impeded by legislation. To use a very general term, we can say that the organization must enjoy a certain degree of legitimacy in the eyes of its environment” (Brunsson 1989, 13–14). In addition to securing support and resources, legitimacy is important for organisations also to maintain the confidence of the organisation’s members internally (Boswell 2007, 604; 2009, 43). As such, organisational success depends in part on how well organisations do at internalising beliefs and understandings that circulate in their environment (Meyer and Rowan 1991, 53).

When seeking to gain legitimacy, organisations often need to espouse particular norms, values, ideologies, or goals vis-à-vis their environment (Brunsson 1989, 5–6):

organizations that omit environmentally legitimated accounts of structure or create unique structures lack acceptable legitimated accounts of their activities. Such organizations are more vulnerable to claims that they are negligent, irrational, or unnecessary (Meyer and Rowan 1991, 50).

Responding to expectations within the environment can constitute a particular challenge when conflicting demands are made vis-à-vis the organisation, as will be further discussed below. Importantly though, “there is no such thing as the environment” in ‘objective’ terms according to new institutionalists (Dery 1986, 19; see also Weick and Bougon 1986). While wider cultural, historical, normative, and cognitive frameworks within organisational environments inform organisational culture (Meyer, Boli, and Thomas 1994, 9), what matters is how organisations perceive and make sense of their environments. Organisational culture and identity influence how organisations interpret, react to, and learn from pressures and expectations within their environment (Greenwood et al. 2008, 16; Olsen 1976, 338). Being constantly reproduced in the day-to-day functioning of the organisation, the beliefs and norms attached to organisational identity help members avoid cognitive overload and reduce the complexity of choices and decisions by portraying only some of a range of options

as rational or thinkable (Boswell 2009, 41; DiMaggio and Powell 1991b). They determine what individuals within organisations perceive and pay attention to in their “infinitely chaotic environment”, and what they deem to be irrelevant or non-existent (Dery 1986, 20).

As Gioia and Sims note, “after a time individuals within a group or an organization tend to think, at least to some degree, alike. Some would call this shared meaning organizational culture” (Gioia and Sims 1986, 8). Often, organisational action will reflect particular routines that have become taken for granted as “the way we do these things”, whereas alternatives become inconceivable to organisational actors (DiMaggio and Powell 1991a; Scott 2014, 68). Rather than ascribing a universal set of behaviours to diverse organisations – following e.g. rational, power-maximising objectives – it is important to examine the specific organisational culture and identity in order to make sense of organisational behaviour. Indeed, “collective understandings and inter-subjective meanings structure the ways that actors define their goals and what they perceive as rational actions” (Horii 2012, 162). Importantly, however, while organisations seek to enhance or maintain their legitimacy through their behaviour, they “can and often do misread the signals they receive from their environments” regarding the conditions they need to meet to do so (Boswell 2009, 45).

Examining Frontex staff’s understandings of the agency and its environment allows for moving beyond a one-dimensional conceptualisation of Frontex as a unitary, power-maximising security agency. Frontex finds itself in the environment of the EUropean border regime, i.e. a multiplicity of actors concerned with the governance of EUropean external borders and migration. Staff and management are acutely aware of the complexities of this environment, and throughout the interviews referred to other organisational actors that had an influence on the running of the agency. When asking about Frontex’s work, changes through time, or future prospects, staff and management members in the headquarters frequently invoked the agency’s multiple “stakeholders” as decisive, stating that “we don’t exist in a vacuum” (FR7) and “everything we do is not done in isolation” (FR4). They consistently noted that the

agency was acting within a wider migration policy framework that it had no influence on.

In the interviews I conducted with Frontex staff and management, Frontex was portrayed as an actor with diverse stakeholders in a contested field. One staff member likened Frontex's history to running and building up the motor of a car at the same time, emphasising the perceived need to deliver results as well as building up structures and capacity at the same time: "the agency didn't choose to consolidate, build up everything and then start running. This was not a, an option which was made available by our management and by our stakeholders" (FR4). FR4 invoked pressures to deliver quickly, making clear that this had been a major challenge for an organisation that was at the same time building up its structures. Frontex staff repeatedly referred to high expectations the agency was facing from its stakeholders, in particular the European Parliament, the Commission, and the member states.

Indeed, several staff members expressed worries that the agency was being burdened with increasing tasks and responsibilities, without the necessary time to consolidate existing structures. More specifically, interviewees emphasised that there were great expectations regarding search and rescue at sea, which as they stated rested on misunderstandings of Frontex's role, or mistaken appraisals of the difficulties of search and rescue operations in practice. Relatedly, staff and management articulated concerns that they might be blamed for travellers' deaths. For example, a management member expressed unease about raising false expectations when talking about the new surveillance system EUROSUR:

what I really dislike at the moment with this whole discussion in the public is that the impression is created that with this system, that the sinking of refugee boats, or the, the rescue at sea could be organised better. And I think also the, the people in Warsaw, in the Situation Centre in Warsaw are very concerned that one day, it is said 'you in Warsaw, you are watching idly as those in the Mediterranean are drowning' (FR9).

Staff and management portrayed search and rescue operations as not only extraordinarily costly but also difficult in practice, given the vast space of the Mediterranean, small boats, and often harsh weather conditions. It appeared that they

felt the need to justify the organisation's approach to rescue at sea. Interviewees expressed worries that Frontex was bound to fail fulfilling exaggerated expectations, and FR1 urged that "we also need to be realistic about it." While there was an attempt to cultivate Frontex's humanitarian image in its public relations at the time I conducted my fieldwork, staff members responded with unease to pressures acting on the agency, and referred back to Frontex's limited mandate and resources possibly to dispel some of that pressure in the interviews.

When speaking about the role of Frontex, staff and management often noted that the agency was rendered highly visible in the border regime, and was frequently criticised. Several interviewees deplored that Frontex was used as a "scapegoat" or seen as "the incarnation of evil". In particular, critiques of 'Fortress Europe' were associated with parts of the European Parliament, whereas calls for 'more Frontex' were linked to the member states and Council. Interviewees did not specifically reference public or activist protests, although they occasionally referred to NGOs as being critical. Overall, their tendency to focus on the actors with an immediate influence on the agency confirms previous studies of administrative agencies. As Christina Boswell notes,

the administration's ultimate source of guidance will be its political leadership. This tends to be a far more important source of legitimation for administrative organizations than the public. Barring some rare cases where bureaucratic structures have become the object of media attention, administrative agencies will not generally draw on public reactions to gauge the legitimacy of their actions. [...] They are likely to respond to these demands only insofar as the political leadership has internalized them, and is pressuring the administration to respond (Boswell 2009, 50 & 51).

The focus of Frontex staff and management on the agency's immediate stakeholders might partially explain its delayed but increasing emphasis on human rights and humanitarianism. While harsh criticism of the agency existed from its very beginnings, the European Parliament only gained increasing powers and competencies when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force at the end of 2009, making it a more influential actor in Frontex's environment (European Parliament 2015a). This might have rendered critical voices from within the European Parliament more relevant and visible to

Frontex staff, and contributed to decisions to respond to them by altering the agency's public self-representations.

When Frontex staff and management referred to outside criticism, they were quick to point out that it was misguided or inappropriate. They emphasised that Frontex was part of a wider field of migration and border governance, and that the agency was only implementing policies and decisions taken elsewhere. As one interviewee explained,

the policy is huge, and the borders are like the culprit of it. The borders are like the gate. And then you stop or enter, it's there. But actually the decision is made somewhere else. That's my perception of the big bubble so to say. That's why you say, you say management of border, but I say, management of the border comes as a consequence of the management of migration. And that's a bigger issue. [...] And then how people are treated and then it's easier to blame the people that treat you bad than to blame the people that you don't see (FR3).

Throughout the interviews, Frontex staff members engaged in blame shifting, arguing that national and EU policymakers were politically responsible for border controls: “if you don't want Fortress Europe, tell the politicians not to create those, those rules” (FR4). In their portrayals, Frontex was intricately bound up with the highly controversial policy area of migration governance, which was however controlled by member states and EU institutions. This meant that both critique aimed at ‘Fortress Europe’ and critical voices regarding the agency's inability to properly ‘close’ the borders were deemed to be misguided if directed at Frontex. As FR2 insisted, “if you don't develop the other structures, you cannot expect border surveillance and control to solve anything [...]. You cannot expect border control to be the ultimate solution for migration.” Similarly, a management member insisted that “[b]order control is the last link of the chain, so when beforehand everything has failed then we will not be the ones stopping it.”

As this indicates, some staff and management members also expressed considerable frustration regarding the policy processes in Brussels that were affecting them, criticising the lack of understanding of policymakers of the processes and requirements of Frontex. During an interview I had with FR1, another staff member was present in the same room, and towards the end of the interview became involved in the

conversation. The exchanges between the two staff members illustrate their frustration, and is worth quoting at length:

FR8: Whatever the Commission proposes, it's always watered down by the Council and the Parliament on the way. So then, a compromise that we have to live with. So we read the regulation and then we look at each other: "so what does it mean?"

FR1: Because so many, so many interests have to be satisfied (laughs) in the end. The wording is such that... okay... (laughs).

FR8: As long as criminal law that's fine, ok, the court will do it. But if you need to do something you should better have clear instructions, and the sea guidelines for Frontex operations, we read them, they are nice. Nothing new.

FR1: We just don't know what it means.

FR8: But it doesn't change anything. There are there, okay, so we attach them to the operational plan (FR1 laughs). Great. Thank you European Parliament, European Council, great.

[...]

FR8: We had something that we were calling best practices manual, that was developed... [...] five years ago. And then with the new regulation we just have to re-do exactly the same thing, but it's called differently. And of course, invite people again, and it's like, I would say, it's like amendments to best practices manual we had. But we would have it anyway, and it changes with time and you collect new practices and so on. But because it was in the regulation, member states were less keen to agree on certain things. Because, it is not binding still for them, but they feel this legal pressure somehow. [...] So it's like, some, some actions are counterproductive I would say. And there is a big fuss, we hear a lot of voices from left to right in the European Parliament, and in the end of the day we get prostheses.

FR1: Because we're an operational, you know, we're an operational agency. We're actually the guys who have to go out there and do it. I mean it's easy to, you know talk about it. But how do you, so what do I do?

[...]

FR8: Well I mean, this is like, our, when we talk in the corridors after such meetings, we always saying, there is this magic expression that we would like someone in Brussels to hear: evidence-based policy-making. It's that simple. Not that I have a feeling that... and then you draft a regulation. Because then you will have nice, legal documents that are completely useless.

While not criticised as explicitly by other staff members, there was an overall emphasis on the fact that policies were decided upon elsewhere, while Frontex was (unjustly) confronted with the consequences and the criticism of these decisions. In particular the European Parliament was portrayed as lacking an understanding of Frontex's role and work, and as posing demands that were not in line with the mandate the agency had been given. Presenting itself as the implementing agency of other institutions'

decisions, Frontex's staff and management thus engaged in double blame-shifting: responsibility was diverted both regarding the difficulties of individuals in reaching EUrope, and regarding the agency's inability to work as efficiently as possible due to interference from the outside.

Fragmented, inconsistent demands, isomorphism, and hypocrisy

New institutionalist scholars hold that organisations observe their environments, and tend to appropriate structures and belief systems they view as successful within other organisations. This process – referred to as isomorphism – means that organisations within a given field eventually share a number of commonalities, despite being independent of each other (DiMaggio and Powell 1991b, 66). As Christina Boswell notes, isomorphism is an important concept in new institutionalism, as it “describes the motivation to internalize rhetoric and practices perceived in an organization's environment” (Boswell 2009, 68). DiMaggio and Powell suggest that there are coercive, mimetic, and normative mechanisms of isomorphic change. The first refers to pressures in the environment, which might be political or legislative pressures by actors the organisation is dependent on, or expectations of funders. In case of noncompliance to particular demands, the organisation might be threatened with sanctions. Mimetic pressures on the other hand are primarily the result of uncertainty, which leads organisations to imitate other actors who appear successful in its environment. Lastly, normative pressures relate to widespread ideas of ‘proper’ conduct or moral obligations, and a logic of appropriateness (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008).

Importantly, responding to coercive or normative pressures from the outside does not necessarily require a radical readjustment of informal organisational practices and structures. External demands might simply not appear useful to the pressured organisation, or they might compete with internal organisational culture and beliefs (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008, 80–81). Boswell (2008) suggests that four different organisational responses are possible in light of external pressure from the environment: full adaptation of the organisation to external pressures; evasion and thus

the failure to adapt to the demands at all; reinterpretation of outside demands through the lens of previously existing organisational culture or ideologies; or decoupling. The latter entails disconnecting different organisational structures from each other and / or from an organisation's activities, enabling organisations to respond to environmental concerns while keeping to procedures in line with internal interpretations of technical needs, efficiency, and functionality: "decoupling enables organizations to maintain standardized, legitimating, formal structures while their activities vary in response to practical considerations" (Meyer and Rowan 1991, 58).

Decoupling also becomes relevant for organisations when they are faced with contradictory pressures from their environment. There might be any number of rationalities which coexist within an organisation's environment, in which different actors, legal structures, or normative ideas suggest different purposes or procedures to be followed (Scott and Meyer 1994a, 117). Both within organisations as well as outside of them, individuals and professional groups hold diverse ideas about organisational processes and goals. "All these demands not only differ from one another, they may well be difficult or impossible to combine: they are contradictory or inconsistent" (Brunsson 1989, 8). Decoupling formal and informal structures, different units within the same organisation, or language and action, can allow an organisation to reconcile contradictory demands. New institutionalist studies have shown that rather than this being an exception, most organisations tend to be only loosely coupled (Meyer, Boli, and Thomas 1994, 15–16). Brunsson suggests that organisations will often establish two different sets of processes and structures in response to external pressures, especially where norms within the environment are in tension with their internal logics:

[o]ne is the formal organization which obeys the institutional norms and which can easily be adapted to new fashions or laws, literally by a few strokes of the pen on an organization chart. A quite different organizational structure can be used in 'reality', i.e. in order to coordinate action. This second type is generally referred to as the 'informal organization'. Similarly two sets of organizational processes arise: one generates action; the other does not, but is kept for purposes of demonstration or display to the outside world. The second processes can be defined as rituals (Brunsson 1989, 7).

Brunsson refers to the decoupling of formal and informal structure, and talk and action, as organisational hypocrisy. He describes this phenomenon as “a fundamental type of behaviour in the political organization: to talk in a way that satisfies one demand, to decide in a way that satisfies another, and to supply products in a way that satisfies a third” (Brunsson 1989, 27).

Importantly, such hypocrisy is often the “natural result of interactions between representatives of the diverse interests and ideas reflected by the organization”, rather than a conscious plan or decision (Brunsson 1989, 29–30). Inconsistencies within organisations tend to reflect wider inconsistencies in their environment: they are not (necessarily) the product of intentional deception by individual actors or groups, but rather – like organisational decision-making more widely – the outcome of the interactions of a variety of actors with different interests, interpretations, and goals. In Frontex’s case, its various stakeholders pose different and contradictory demands on the agency. Maintaining inconsistencies within the organisation is one way of negotiating these various pressures: “[m]any organizations cannot or do not want to avoid inconsistent norms; instead they become expert at generating support, resources and legitimacy from environments exhibiting just such inconsistency” (Brunsson 1989, 9).

In conclusion, institutionalist analyses conceptualise incoherence and contradictions not necessarily as organisational failure, but as a potentially “reasonable strategy for coping with conflict” (Boswell 2008, 510; see also Meyer and Rowan 1991). Where changes in language and descriptions are not translated into structures or activities, new institutionalists emphasise that even ceremonial or ritualistic changes can lead to modifications in self-understandings and power relations within organisations over time (DiMaggio and Powell 1991b, 67; Meyer and Rowan 1991, 50–51).

Frontex as a fragmented and loosely coupled organisation

Examining Frontex through the perspective of new institutionalism offers valuable insights, which further complement the two perspectives presented in chapter 4.

Frontex faces a variety of diverse pressures from its different stakeholders, including the management board as well as the Parliament: inevitably, some of these pressures will be in tension or outright contradiction with one another. While embracing a security-focused discourse quickly gained Frontex “a considerable amount of confidence and goodwill among national authorities” in its early years (Hobbing 2010, 71), for instance, it simultaneously led to criticism by the European Parliament for its disregard of fundamental rights. In interviews, staff members pointed to the difficulty of being faced with such diverse and partly incompatible demands from their environment. FR1 elaborated:

I mean if you read some of the articles you’ll see that there is that sort of, Frontex was there and you know, there is not enough Frontex. There is too much Frontex. Frontex is ineffective. Frontex is too small. Frontex should be shut down. You know, there are voices in every direction (FR1).

FR4 explained that Frontex staff were working in a sensitive area, which meant that “you cannot be satisfying the wishes of everyone. Everyone has different perspectives on problems and you must be aware that there is criticism and you have to take it into account” (FR4). As an EU agency, Frontex has since its foundation been confronted with conflicting and at times incompatible demands from different external actors controlling parts of the agency (the Commission; the member states and the Council; the European Parliament). Given that the agency is dependent on these diverse EU institutions for its existence and budget, negotiating these demands in its own work has been of great importance to its legitimacy and survival.

As the previous chapter has shown, Frontex’s public language has transformed rather strongly over the last few years, increasingly invoking an image of the organisation as a fundamental rights promoter and a saviour of people in distress at sea. In the last 5 years in particular, Frontex staff have responded to outside pressures and demands by changing the agency’s self-representation. When I asked a management member about the statement on the agency website that Frontex was Europe’s biggest search and rescue operation, their explanation revealed that there had been a conscious attempt by

some in the agency to respond to outside criticism through Frontex's public self-representation:

[t]hat's a reaction to accusations by members of the European Parliament regarding Frontex. And myself and [then Frontex Executive Director] Laitinen, we had a, we then said now it's enough of us being portrayed as those who are letting people drown in the Mediterranean. We will write down the numbers. Those are only the people who have been rescued in the framework of Frontex-coordinated operations. Whom the Greek coastguard fished out of the sea apart from that, or the Italians, I don't actually know. But through Frontex operations alone, coordinated by Frontex, by now, I think by now almost 40,000 people have been fished out of the sea. Who otherwise simply would have drowned, okay? And then we said, well, these border control operations do not only have the goal of organising border protection, but on this occasion so many are saved. So that one should ask oneself the question, there was this talk about abolishing Frontex and all these stories. And then of course there are also these kinds of numbers (FR9).

Rather than outlining any particular change in structures or actions, the interviewee explained how pressures and criticism by the European Parliament spurred Frontex staff and management to portray the agency's work differently, making changes to its website and emphasising the amount of people Frontex operations were saved as a 'by-product' of border protection operations.

When examining the European Parliament's interactions with Frontex over time, it is clear that the Parliament has exerted sustained normative and coercive pressure on the agency in relation to human rights and search and rescue operations, after having been marginalised in the founding process of the agency (see chapter 4). In 2009, the Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) Committee warned that Frontex operations risked creating "a zone of indistinction and arbitrariness, contrary to the EU values," as regards the applicability of human rights (LIBE Committee 2009, p.18; Williams 2010, p.149). In 2010, the Parliament issued a resolution in response to allegations of human rights abuses against individuals returned to Libya by Frontex operations, calling on "member states that deport migrants to Libya, in cooperation with Frontex [...] to stop doing so immediately [...]" where the principle of *non-refoulement* might be violated (European Parliament 2010). The Parliament also repeatedly invited Frontex's executive director for presentations and questioning over the years (Baldaccini 2010; LIBE Committee 2014; Martin 2013; statewatch 2012b).

In 2011, the European Parliament and the Council expanded Frontex's mandate. As noted in chapter 4, in particular the European Parliament insisted on strengthening the role of fundamental rights in Frontex's founding regulation (European Parliament 2011; statewatch 2012a). With the amendments, Frontex had to create the Consultative Forum as well as to establish the position of the Fundamental Rights Officer. Following the amendments, the European Ombudsman conducted an own-initiative inquiry into the agency's implementation of its fundamental rights obligations (European Ombudsman 2012, 2013; Neumann 2013). The procedure prompted lengthy replies from Frontex, which made its Fundamental Rights Strategy and Action Plan public (Frontex 2012c), and invited NGOs to comment on these plans and explanations, with many taking a critical approach (Amnesty International 2012; Caritas 2012; Human Rights Watch 2012b; Jesuit Refugee Service 2012; Meijers Committee 2012; Red Cross / EU Office 2012; statewatch and migreurop 2012). Frontex has thus faced sustained normative and coercive pressures to improve its safeguards for fundamental rights not only by the European Parliament, but also by the European Ombudsman and NGOs, legal scholars, and activists.

Given the growing importance of the European Parliament in particular, it is likely that those working for the agency felt a need to respond to these external pressures. By the time I conducted my interviews, all staff and management members I spoke with invoked fundamental rights consistently and without prompting, and Frontex's public documents and reports had greatly increased their mentioning of fundamental rights. Indeed, references to fundamental rights seemed to have become routine-like, like a well-rehearsed and necessary part of every explanation of Frontex's activities. Illustrating this most clearly, one staff member said:

of course I don't want to be boring and talk about fundamental rights, you know, how it's always in our operational plans, there are codes of conducts, there are trainings about it... just to make sure that, you know, when Frontex has an operation, it's carried out up to the highest standards. We get criticised anyway, but we can do what we can do, you know (FR1).

Another interviewee however noted in passing that Frontex's increase in rights-related language did not always lead to structural changes:

in relation to fundamental rights, a lot apparently, in the old regulation there was not much reference to this, but they started preparing already before the amendment of the regulation. So it has evolved very much. And the [fundamental rights] strategy was made before the regulation was amended. Like 6, 9 months before or something like that. Several months. So they were really aware that, that critics were there. So to say. And so [Frontex is] now trying to see whether, structurally, they need structures I mean inside in order to do everything that's needed (FR3).

While Frontex might thus have adopted its fundamental rights strategy in response to outside pressures in April 2011, this did not immediately lead to structural changes within the organisation. When conducting my first interviews 2.5 years after the strategy was passed, I was told that internal structures to ensure the mainstreaming of fundamental rights throughout the agency were still lacking. It thus seems that references to human rights are at least partially ritualistic portrayals of the agency's acceptance of these principles to its environment, which are not necessarily linked to meaningful structural changes. Indeed, the most visible structural changes pertaining to fundamental rights within Frontex are the creation of the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights and the position of the Fundamental Rights Officer. Both, however, were not initiated by the agency itself, but imposed on it by the European Parliament and the Council. In fact, there was fierce resistance from member states in the management board and Council working groups regarding the Fundamental Rights Officer and the Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, a member of Frontex's management told me. Staff members added that resistance regarding these proposals prevailed also among Frontex staff at the time. While Frontex's management board passed the agency's Fundamental Rights Strategy before the legislative changes and references to fundamental rights had become more frequent in Frontex's PR at the time, the change in organisational language did not lead to an openness to structural adjustments. Ultimately, both the FRO and the Forum were imposed on the agency from the outside.

Overall, disparities regarding the self-representations of Frontex and its work by staff and management, guest officers, and public documents indicate that Frontex is a loosely coupled organisation, in which a number of conflicting rationalities coexist. First, its operations are largely decoupled from its core organisation. Not only do guest officers feel distanced from Frontex, agency staff also noted that at the time of the initial interviews (December 2013), only around 30% of their officers in operations had undergone Frontex training. Guest officers are thus likely to be primarily influenced by their national border guard culture and training (as well as their personal predispositions), and fail to be familiarised with – let alone internalise – Frontex’s organisational culture and identity. The loose coupling between the organisational culture and identity promoted in Frontex’s headquarters on the one hand and that of guest officers on the other hand allows for the coexistence of diverse interpretations of border guarding among those who implement Frontex joint operations at the EU’s external borders. By not imposing a coherent or unitary understanding among those working for Frontex at the external borders, potential conflicts with member states over ways of thinking and doing border controls are avoided. Instead, space for diversity, contradiction, and incoherence among guest and seconded officers’ understandings seems to exist.

Second, different units within Frontex’s headquarters are only loosely coupled to each other. FR3 noted that some staff members were trained and aware of fundamental rights, while there was a large effort needed to train other staff and guest officers in order to increase their awareness and understanding. The NGO member of the Consultative Forum I interviewed similarly emphasised that there were discrepancies between different parts of the organisation regarding their openness to the Consultative Forum when I asked about its working relationship with Frontex:

with the Fundamental Rights Officer, excellent. [...] Other parts of the headquarters also good. Good, pleasant working atmosphere. Sometimes, but well that is then conditioned by the respective roles and origins, there are difficulties because some colleagues first have to learn what we are talking about. So especially the risk analysis unit understands its task and its work as rather technical and has not had a lot to do with the topic of human rights and individual fates so far. And needed to understand first of all what our problem is. That still remains a bit of work. Other parts of the

secretariat still have a little bit a very bureaucratic approach, also a very police-like approach, but overall the cooperation with Frontex isn't bad. [...] Cooperation with the management board - I would not talk about cooperation. The management board clearly did not want us (NGO).

Different parts of Frontex were thus perceived as demonstrating rather different attitudes vis-à-vis the Forum by this interviewee. Especially the management board was described as non-cooperative, contrary to other parts of Frontex's headquarters that were viewed as relatively easy to work with.

Third, the interviews I conducted as well as my observations during the Frontex management board meeting showed that also Frontex's management is far from united, and is fragmented within itself as well as only loosely coupled to the agency. Frontex staff members articulated frustration regarding for instance human rights abuses by particular member states from which they distanced themselves. As noted already, during the management board meeting, two member states were asked to provide an explanation of recent incidents at their external borders, which had left several people attempting to cross their borders dead. In informal and formal conversations, various management board Members expressed their frustration either with each other (for violating fundamental rights) or with Frontex (for blaming such violations on member states). Rather than being a coherent, unitary agency controlled by a uniform management board, Frontex is thus a fragmented and partially decoupled organisation. The agency's fragmentation and loose coupling allows for the separation of its self-representations towards the outside from its organisational procedures and rules on the one hand, and its everyday practices on the other hand. This enables Frontex to demonstrate that it responds to diverse and contradictory external pressures, while maintaining flexibility in its practices and procedures at the same time.

Conclusion

Challenging conventional depictions of Frontex as a unitary, rational actor, this chapter has shown that the agency is instead a fragmented, contradictory and only loosely coupled organisation. While relatively homogeneous interviews with staff and senior

officials seemed to reflect an organisational identity existing within the agency, they also revealed that there are divergences between public rhetoric and internal interpretations, among management board members, between different headquarter units, and between management board members and agency staff. Drawing on new institutionalism, I have argued that this form of decoupling represents a response to diverse and partially contradictory external pressures on an agency that is urged to stop or at least decrease irregular migration on an ad-hoc basis, to search and rescue individuals at sea, to respect fundamental rights, and to predict, prepare for, and manage risks at the external borders. As legitimacy among Frontex's immediate stakeholders is of existential importance to the agency, there is a clear need for it to respond to these external demands to maintain support from its environment.

A loosely coupled state allows for the coexistence of these different rationalities within different aspects of the agency's work. While Frontex staff and management have sought to enhance its legitimacy by changing its public rhetoric, this did not lead to the adaptation of internal structures before changes were imposed from the outside. A loose connection between Frontex's organisational identity on the one hand and the guest officers implementing its operations on the other hand avoids potential conflicts with member states over rationalities and beliefs border guards in the EU should adhere to. As I have shown throughout the chapter, Frontex's staff and management expressed profound concerns regarding the way the agency was perceived from the outside, and the amount of criticism it attracts. Rather than conceptualising Frontex as a unitary, rational, and power-maximising actor as is commonly the case in critical security studies, I argue that these concerns to respond to contradictory demands posed from the outside are reflected in Frontex's decoupled state, the discrepancies between different units, language and structures, and between those implementing Frontex operations on the ground and those planning them in the headquarters.

Chapter 6: The Effects of Frontex's Re-Positioning

Thus far, this thesis has focused primarily on two issues. First, it explored the factors that made it possible for humanitarianism and human rights to be incorporated by the security actor Frontex. By examining the history of the discursive formations and their characteristics today, I argued that they shared a number of similarities with each other. This reflection sheds light not only on Frontex's appropriation of these discursive formations in its public documents and within the narratives drawn on by those working for the agency, it also provides important insights regarding the strengthening of humanitarianism and human rights in the EUropean border regime more widely. While humanitarianism and human rights have been among the main discursive tools of those seeking to oppose violent border practices, they ultimately proved combinable with a concern to 'manage' migration and to 'secure' EUrope from potential threats. Humanitarian and human rights concerns could be reconciled with long-standing practices by security actors such as Frontex, including patrolling activity and surveillance (which has been declared to save lives), and the return of 'unwanted' arrivals to countries of origin and transit (while respecting fundamental rights safeguards), among others.

While the history and discursive similarities between humanitarianism, human rights, and security were explored in chapter 2, chapters 4 and 5 offered three different ways of knowing Frontex, and of conceptualising the apparent shift towards humanitarianism and human rights within the agency. Examinations of Frontex through the policy documents leading up to its foundation on the one hand, and its publications since it was established on the other hand were complemented with a third perspective, which drew on interview data and participant observation. Each of these ways of knowing Frontex provided different – and always necessarily partial – insights relating to the agency and its environment. Taken together, they offered an image of Frontex as a fragmented organisation negotiating divergent demands in a highly contested environment, in part by combining seemingly diverse discursive formations in its public self-representations. In this process, common narratives that already

enmeshed humanitarianism, human rights, and security were drawn on, while new connections between the discursive formations were made at the same time. Widely known narratives of ‘unscrupulous smugglers’ or ‘asylum fraudsters’ were thus combined with relatively new emphases on for instance the positive effects of Frontex’s joint operations on member states’ fundamental rights situations, or regularly released figures regarding the numbers of people saved by vessels participating in sea operations.

What remains to be done in the remainder of this thesis – before moving to its conclusion – is a consideration of the effects the entanglement of humanitarianism, human rights, and security has had in contemporary EUropean border governance. The previous chapters have sought to explain what enabled their partial blurring, and how their increasing intertwinement within Frontex’s self-representations can be understood from different perspectives. This chapter, on the other hand, will reflect on some of the effects of Frontex’s shift towards humanitarianism and human rights, and of the strengthening of humanitarianism and human rights alongside a continued conceptualisation of migration as a risk and a threat in EUropean border governance more widely. As outlined in chapter 1, this thesis rejects a conceptualisation of borders as static and given, and instead sees them as processes that are constantly being reproduced by a variety of actors. This is in line with an understanding of discursive formations as performative (Butler 1993).

The growing intertwinement of humanitarianism, human rights, and security formations in Frontex’s public documents, and in the self-representations of some of those working for and with the agency thus produces particular effects. More widely, as the discursive formations mobilised by the various actors enacting EUropean external borders shift or blur, this affects how bordering is performed. This chapter will outline some of these effects, both in relation to Frontex in particular, and as regards the EUropean border regime more widely.²³ In doing so, I draw on data

²³ Importantly, I am not suggesting here that Frontex staff and management intended to present the agency in a particular way with these effects in mind – that would not only overly simplify complex organisational processes that cannot easily be reduced to the intentions of individual staff members, but

collected through interviews, informal conversations, and observations, as well as public statements and documents released by Frontex.

First, I discuss the effects of the blurring of humanitarianism, human rights, and exceptionalist security in crisis narratives prevailing in contemporary EUropean border governance, focusing on the invocation of humanitarian or border control ‘crises’ and its relationship to less spectacular modes of governance. In doing so, I argue that crisis narratives have strengthened Frontex, as the agency has become positioned as the solution to humanitarian, human rights, and security ‘crises’ alike. Second, I show that the appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights in Frontex’s public documents has created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of new coalitions in the border regime not only in relation to crisis narratives, but also as regards risk management approaches. Here, I argue that a common focus on categorising, identifying, and managing populations has allowed security, humanitarian, and human rights actors to cooperate with each other in governing populations in EUropean borderlands. As these newly emerging coalitions tend to stop short of questioning the fundamental assumptions underlying contemporary border governance, they further reinforce the ‘othering’ of people on the move and feed into a dominant risk management approach.

Third, I re-examine the narrative of Frontex’s role as a promoter of fundamental rights that staff and management members presented to me. In doing so, I argue that this narrative positions Frontex as a ‘civilising force’ that spreads EUropean values and standards of border guarding across EUropean territory, particularly to ‘problematic’ EUropean member states in the South (and) East. Finally, I reflect on the potential effects of common efforts by diverse actors to ensure EUropean border guards’ conformity with human rights and humanitarian principles. On this last point, my argument might appear more normative than elsewhere: rather than analysing

would also encounter the methodological difficulties related to ascribing motivations that I outlined in chapter 4. Instead, after exploring how and why the blurring of humanitarianism, human rights, and security formations has become possible in the previous chapters, I will now proceed to explore how the intertwining of the formations has been productive.

developments that already took place, I reflect on some of the potential consequences of the growing emphasis on humanitarianism and human rights in EUropean border governance, drawing on the insights gained during my fieldwork.

Governing borders through crisis narratives

The strengthening of the discursive formation of humanitarianism in the EUropean border regime in recent years went hand in hand with the declaration of various ‘crises’. Crisis narratives have become pervasive: references to a humanitarian crisis, a crisis of border control, a crisis of the asylum system, a Schengen crisis, a protection crisis, a refugee crisis, a migrant crisis, a crisis of Europe, and of course a financial crisis and a demographic crisis have become frequent and, to an extent, normalised. In EUropean border governance, crisis narratives have increasingly been bound up with notions of humanitarianism and human rights, focusing on tragic deaths, large-scale suffering, or the lack of basic provisions for those newly arrived, including medical care, food, water, or shelter. Human Rights Watch (2012a) for instance spoke out forcefully against a “hidden emergency” in the Mediterranean, calling for urgent action to put an end to deaths at sea. The UNHCR warned of a “colossal humanitarian catastrophe” threatening to materialise at EUrope’s southern borders (Sherwood et al. 2014). And the events of 2015 seemed to confirm this warning, as media, policymakers, NGOs and international organisations alike invoked an unprecedented refugee or migrant ‘crisis’ in EUropean borderlands, drawing on the discursive formations of humanitarian, human rights, and security alike.

In this section, I will explore what the invocation of crisis does in contemporary EUropean border governance, examining how the term ‘crisis’ enables some questions while foreclosing others (Roitman 2014, 10). Rather than conceptualising crisis as the occurrence of specific events, I analyse it as a discursive narrative which produces particular meanings. As Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins note, this narrative is “conducive to the adoption of emergency or exceptional measures. [...] The pervasiveness of crisis labelling, however, should not lead to the conclusion that EU

migration and border control policies operate solely through the logics of emergency and exception” (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2014, 116). Following Huysmans’ (2006a, 82) discussion on the coexistence of technocratic politics and political spectacle as interrelated but distinct processes in the governance of migration, Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins suggest that crisis narratives are most prevalent among professionals of politics, who draw on them as a routine part of political spectacle. Security professionals, including those working for Frontex, are instead informed more strongly by bureaucratic routines.

Indeed, Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins argue that Frontex adheres to a risk management discourse, which is “regularly at odds” with more spectacular crisis politics (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2014, 121). The analyses conducted in this thesis, however, suggest that this is only partially the case. Chapters 4 and 5 showed that references to risk, planning, and preparedness were frequent in Frontex’s publications and interviews. Nevertheless, they also showed that crises and emergencies were invoked. While risk management is a large part of what the agency does and how it is defined by those working for it, interviewees and public documents also constructed particular events as ‘crises’. Rather than understanding Frontex’s approach as being in conflict with the declaration of crises, I suggest that the agency relies on both risk management and crisis narratives. Indeed, the apparent tensions between both approaches within Frontex’s self-representations are productive, and have been beneficial for the agency. As outlined in chapter 5, Frontex is positioned in a contested environment with multiple stakeholders, and seeks to respond to at times contradictory external pressures to secure its legitimacy. Incorporating both an emphasis on routine risk analysis as well as declaring a readiness to respond to ‘crises’ opens up the possibility of satisfying diverse stakeholders. It allows the agency to maintain legitimacy with professionals of politics in its environment (including member states’ governments), and to secure support from more technocratic actors like the European Commission.

Moreover, a focus on risk management is not necessarily at odds with crisis narratives. Jef Huysmans’ conceptualisation of diffuse and exceptionalist securitising as two

techniques of enacting insecurity is helpful here (see chapter 2). While they have different modes of operation, a focus on risk management can become embedded in an exceptionalist framing. In this case, “the routines are deployed in and come to symbolise a fight against violent enemies that pose an existential threat to the polity” (Huysmans 2014, 61). In addition, it is important to note that both modes of enacting insecurity can and do feed into each other in practice. This was emphasised by some of the interviewees, who explained that urgent interventions produced information that was fed back into Frontex’s ‘risk analyses,’ which then enhanced the ‘operational response’ to perceived risks and threats, including ‘urgent’ interventions. Rather than understanding Frontex purely as a risk management agency, the organisation can thus be seen as enacting both diffuse and exceptionalist securitising. Each of these modes of operation produces particular effects. While this section reflects on the performativity of crises narratives, the effects of risk management are discussed in the following section.

Roitman proposes conceptualising crisis narratives through the metaphor of a “blind spot”: invoking a crisis is based on assumptions about how certain processes or categories should work, without accounting for the ways in which such categories are produced in the first place (Roitman 2014, 13). Using the term ‘crisis’ moreover implies an urgency to respond (Calhoun 2010). In declaring a humanitarian or security crisis in EUrope, the focus is on the number of deaths at sea, or the number of unauthorised border crossings. The wider context of particular events, including visa policies and global wealth and power disparities, tends to be obscured. A common focus on the ‘urgent’ need to address particular ‘problems’ allows diverse actors – including state and security actors, NGOs, international organisations, activists and volunteers – to cooperate in their responses to proclaimed ‘crises’, without having to agree on a common interpretation of the wider social, economic, and political conditions producing these ‘problems’ in the first place.

Following Butler and Foucault, Roitman argues that “crisis is productive; it is the means to transgress and is necessary for change or transformation” (Roitman 2014, 35). She mobilises Reinhart Koselleck’s (2006) genealogy of the concept ‘crisis’,

highlighting that it initially implied decision and judgment. As the New Keywords Collective (2016) emphasises, this “draw[s] our attention to the new spaces of intervention and government that discourses about the (multiple) European ‘crises’ have opened up” (New Keywords Collective 2016, 11). Indeed, crises narratives produce particular, ‘response-able’ actors (van Reekum 2016). When EUropean governments, agencies, volunteers, and NGOs cooperate to react to ‘crises’ declared in the Mediterranean, their interventions work to affirm their agency and humanity. These interventions simultaneously project the Mediterranean Sea as a EUropean space of care and control. In addition, they portray problematic events as originating outside of EUrope:

imaginings and representations of contemporary illegalized migration suggest not only that “Europe” is confronted with a “crisis” that originates “elsewhere,” therefore, but also that “Europe” is a kind of “victim” of unfathomable conflicts erupting elsewhere, derived from the incapacity or incompetence of (postcolonial) “others” to adequately govern themselves (New Keywords Collective 2016, 13).

Those ‘others’ who are on the move, on the other hand, are presented as passive subjects to be governed: to be saved from distress, processed in centres, provided with aid, screened for potential risks; to be pitied and/or feared. Meanwhile, the term ‘crisis’ no longer invokes just a singular moment of decision and judgment, but has come to be understood as a condition, a protracted state of being (Roitman 2014, 16). Indeed, “we must recognize that – regarding illegalized migration into and across Europe – the very distinction between (and separation of) what is ostensibly “stable” and “in crisis” is altogether tenuous, indeed, dubious” (New Keywords Collective 2016, 10).

In this protracted state of ‘crisis’ in EUropean border governance, Frontex has come to profit from constantly reproduced crisis narratives. When examining post-hoc budget increases to Frontex, it emerges that the agency’s planned budget was increased repeatedly in response to events that were framed as ‘crises’ in the Mediterranean, including in 2011, 2014, and 2015. In 2011, the declared ‘crisis’ was connected to a perceived loss of control over EUropean borders, as increased numbers of individuals left from Tunisia and Libya at the height of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ (Carrera, Den

Hertog, and Parkin 2012). In 2014, Frontex's budget was increased post-hoc to allow it to step in for (though not replace) Italy's military-humanitarian Mare Nostrum operation, justified by the need for continued search and rescue activities at sea (European Commission 2014c; Frontex 2015). The 2015 budget increase came as the almost immediate response to the deaths of more than 800 individuals in a single incident in April of that year (European Council 2015).

Frontex has thus emerged as a 'go-to' solution to a variety of 'crises' in EUrope. The agency's status as the almost automatic solution proposed by EU and national policymakers in response to diverse 'crises' in the border regime in recent years relies on its broad positioning as a security, humanitarian, and human rights actor. Not only does the agency present itself as key to improving and harmonising EUropean border controls, surveillance and patrolling, but also, it emphasises its contributions to search and rescue at sea, and it portrays itself as actively promoting human rights among Schengen member states and national border guards. Through its self-representation as rescuer at sea, promoter of fundamental rights, and protector of EUropean borders and citizens, Frontex has become positioned as a key solution to migration 'crises.' Importantly, declarations of crises and emergencies – also when coming from outside the agency – have thus strengthened rather than weakened Frontex (see also Campesi 2014, 130). While agency staff and management in part pursue a risk management discourse, they not only mobilise crisis labelling themselves at times, but have also profited from other actors' declarations of 'crises' in EUropean border governance.

In addition to Frontex's positioning as the almost automatic response to diverse 'crises', the close entanglement and partial blurring of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in the EUropean border regime have created the preconditions for swift transitions between the three discursive formations as responses to 'crises' are sought. While crises might be declared in light of deaths at sea or poor reception conditions for arrivals, responses to these humanitarian or human rights concerns have drawn on security practices that precede the particular crises in question, including a strengthening of patrolling activities, surveillance, or cooperation with countries of origin and transit. The EUropean response to the October 3rd 2013 shipwreck off the

coast of Lampedusa – in which more than 360 individuals lost their lives – illustrates this. EUropean policymakers were vocal in framing the incident as a humanitarian tragedy, and quickly called for the further reinforcement of Frontex. Commissioner Cecilia Malmström advocated a large-scale search and rescue operation led by Frontex in the Mediterranean Sea, ranging from Cyprus to Gibraltar (Malmström 2013c).

In addition, the Commission-led “Task Force Mediterranean” (in which Frontex participated) was created and asked to present proposals to prevent similar tragedies in the future. The Taskforce’s recommendations document is an example of how the unequivocal declaration of a humanitarian emergency turned to previously existing security practices in a search for ‘urgent’ responses. Its recommendations were framed as seeking to “fight irregular migration”, as well as “combating the smugglers’ and traffickers’ networks” (European Commission 2013, 7). Proposed measures included the closer cooperation with transit countries in North Africa, further surveillance, and a reinforcement of Frontex. Improved surveillance was said to contribute to “the protection and saving of lives of migrants in the Mediterranean” (European Commission 2013, 3 & 16). The Taskforce thus proposed the increased control and restriction of migratory movements in the Mediterranean, largely by advocating the intensification and continuation of prior policy mechanisms and activities.

As Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins note, crisis responses often “[call] on pre-existing modes of governance and routines of control while at the same time introducing new approaches and responses made possible by the disruptive quality of crisis” (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016, 318). While the Taskforce document shows the reliance on previously existing measures, the Italian response to October 3rd 2013 illustrates how crisis narratives can also create openings for new approaches. Its humanitarian-military operation Mare Nostrum involved Italian military forces in search and rescue activities and the patrol of the Mediterranean, greatly expanding Italy’s zone of influence in the Mediterranean and directly merging military and humanitarian objectives. Both in creating openings for new measures, and in resorting to practices already well established in EUropean border governance, however, crisis narratives explicitly drawing on the discursive formations of humanitarian and human

rights did not lead to a shift away from security rationales, and resulted largely in a continuation of security-based policies and practices in the Mediterranean. Whether invoked by those working for Frontex, or by professionals of politics, crisis narratives have furthermore strengthened the position of Frontex in the EUropean border regime by positioning it as the ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to diverse ‘crises’ at EUropean external borders.

Risk management and the emergence of new coalitions

As noted, crisis narratives facilitate the working together of diverse actors, including NGOs and activists, international organisations, police and border forces, and Frontex. Importantly, this holds not only for crisis narratives, but also for risk management. As argued in chapter 2, the shared fundamentals of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security have enabled Frontex (and other state and security actors) to appropriate humanitarianism and human rights alongside a continued focus on responding to ‘crises’ and managing ‘risks’. Moreover, they produce the conditions in which diverse actors’ cooperation can thrive: despite different mandates and concerns, humanitarian, human rights, and security actors share common understandings. In particular, they all have a focus on categorisation, which is seen as the basis for responding to new arrivals according to the risk they pose, the needs they have, or the rights they hold. This common emphasis has allowed for an intensified cooperation of actors across these fields. Not only are crisis narratives and managerial approaches thus closely related, but both are enmeshed with humanitarian and human rights formations in contemporary EUropean border governance.

The interconnections between risk management, humanitarianism, and human rights became visible for instance during the European Day for Border Guards 2013. Panellists from Frontex, the Italian government, Médecins Sans Frontières, and the European External Action Service discussed the need to “manage” migration effectively and to identify those with protection needs from amid “mixed flows.” While the discursive formations of human rights and humanitarianism were drawn on

by an NGO representative and in the statements of other panellists, they contributed to a managerial discourse in which humanitarian, human rights, and risk management concerns converged. The focus on dividing individuals into ‘victims in need’ and ‘others’ thereby further strengthened a dominant risk management narrative. While humanitarian and human rights actors might argue for exceptions to a risk-based understanding for particular categories of people (according to their presumed need or legal entitlement), in doing so they “confirm the security norm against which these outliers are to be measured. Claiming that exceptions need to be made, they (unwillingly) contribute to targeted risk management that depends on these very categorizations” (van Munster 2009, 143).

Furthermore, an emphasis on identification and categorisation reinforces the ‘othering’ of those on the move: by presenting them as victims to be assisted, and / or threats to be carefully screened, they are juxtaposed to the figure of the EUropean citizen, and produced as racialized and faceless, variably helpless, abused, or potentially threatening ‘other’ (see chapter 2). While the overall focus is on the management and classification of individuals, the subject positions produced in this way are nevertheless inherently unstable, and can swiftly transform from one into the other (Agier 2011a; New Keywords Collective 2016; Pallister-Wilkins 2015). Again, there thus exist moments of close connection and even transition between the formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security, as discussed already in relation to ‘crisis responses’ in the previous section. The cooperation of Frontex with diverse other actors was not only apparent during the European Day for Border Guards, however. In fact, Frontex’s Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights is a further insightful example here. The Forum consists of nine NGOs,²⁴ two EU agencies,²⁵ and six

²⁴ As of December 2015, these are: Advice on Individual Rights in Europe Centre, Amnesty International’s European Institutions Office; Caritas Europa; Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe; European Council for Refugees and Exiles; International Commission of Jurists; Jesuit Refugee Service; Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants; Red Cross EU Office. From 2012-2015, the International Catholic Migration Commission was part of the CF, whereas Advice on Individual Rights in Europe Centre was not.

²⁵ European Asylum Support Office; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

international organisations²⁶ that regularly advise Frontex on matters pertaining to human rights. Its members work without remuneration by the agency and provide advice on all aspects of Frontex's work, ranging from offering feedback on written codes of conduct to observing trainings to visiting operations. Initially, there was strong opposition within the agency to the proposal of a Consultative Forum:

[t]o be completely open, initially the member states fought massively against that, both in Brussels [...] and in the management board, against the Consultative Forum. [...] Then it was pushed through somehow and once you have it, you have to see that you make the best of it (FR9).

While many explained that they had been sceptical at first, all staff members I spoke with – between one and one and a half years after the Consultative Forum's establishment – viewed the Forum positively, and found cooperation with it to be constructive. As the interviewee cited above went on to outline, “many member states have lost the fear that we would get an additional watchdog, which would maybe also organise shaming and blaming. That – thank god – doesn't happen, so that we can say that the Consultative Forum, the way we configured it, works well at this moment.” Far from being perceived as a threat to Frontex's work, the Consultative Forum is thus seen as a constructive force, assisting Frontex in improving its work. Indeed, FR6 stated, “we couldn't count on a better advice body, I would say.”

In the Forum, fundamental questions such as the very existence of Frontex or border controls more generally do not form part of the discussions; the focus is instead on improving existing procedures, particularly those pertaining to refugee protection. Tellingly, a key term in Frontex's organisational discourse is “best practices”: these are represented as enabling efficient and effective border control, while simultaneously adhering to human rights standards and humanitarian principles. The common goal of emerging coalitions in which Frontex, NGOs, and international organisations cooperate with one another is the advancement of such “best practices”, which entail

²⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Council of Europe; International Organisation for Migration; Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

the ‘humanisation’ of border controls rather than their fundamental questioning. As the NGO Forum member I spoke with explained,

we don’t talk about the question of Frontex’s existence, that we take for given, but we also make clear that our work, or the fact that we are part of the Consultative Forum, that that is not connected to a fundamental agreement with everything that Frontex or the member states do [...].

While different viewpoints exist within the Consultative Forum, the willingness to keep working together seems to be strong: when Frontex expressed discontent with the Forum’s first annual report in February 2014, it was reworked before being released publicly. While I was not informed what the source of the disagreement was, the report was made publicly available only several months later, in July 2014, likely indicating prolonged negotiations (Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights 2013).²⁷ As the Forum provides support to draw up or adapt codes of conduct, or to mainstream human rights throughout Frontex’s activities, the common pursuit of Frontex and the Forum is the optimisation of border governance.

Also beyond the Forum and the European Day for Border Guards, I was told by Frontex staff that the agency was “opening up” to NGOs, by for instance reaching out to organisations with specific expertise when developing new guidance for border guards. Speaking about a new handbook on “vulnerable children” in airports, a staff member explained how Frontex had invited NGOs to discuss a draft document. They asserted that there was

²⁷ Interestingly, the Forum’s second annual report – published after the end of data collection for this thesis – included a foreword by Frontex’s management board and executive director in which they deplored three “misunderstandings” contained in the report, which had *not* been re-drafted and clarified despite an explicit request by Frontex’s leadership. The statement ends with these lines: “The management board and executive director of Frontex welcome any critical views on the activities performed by the Agency and are ready to constructively discuss such views with the Consultative Forum. However, such views should not be communicated within an official report, possibly leading to confusion for the general public about Frontex responsibilities” (Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights 2015, 5). Contrary to the first year, it thus appears that the Forum resisted pressures by Frontex leadership to change its report, and Frontex’s director and management decided to publicly disclose tensions between the Forum and the agency to distance themselves from some of the recommendations made.

an open approach from Frontex, also to receive critics, and also to find a common ground for cooperation. And at the end of the workshop of course we ended up with a document which was endorsed by everybody, so by the member states, Frontex itself, and the NGOs and international organisations (FR6).

While the agency's first steps of "opening up" to NGOs and international organisations might have been legally mandated, it goes beyond these legal requirements by now, and succeeds in creating agreements with diverse organisations regarding its work. At the same time, Frontex maintains close links with national border guards and the security industry, and is thus positioned as a contact point between these diverse social worlds. As such, Frontex is at the heart of newly emerging coalitions of human rights, humanitarian, and security actors, who work together in their pursuit to optimise and 'humanise' EUropean border controls.

When seeking to explain these emerging coalitions, conventional accounts might point to instrumental and strategic reasons, including the involved actors' interests (such as obtaining legitimacy for Frontex, or having a more direct influence on border practices for NGOs and international organisations). Other explanations might note intricate connections between nongovernmental and governmental spheres in terms of personnel, which facilitates the increasing proximity of NGOs, international organisations, and security organisations: some of Frontex's staff members have backgrounds in NGOs or humanitarian and human rights law.²⁸ While these perspectives might provide plausible accounts of Frontex's cooperation with NGOs and international organisations, the analysis in this thesis suggests that there are also other forces at work. The "constructive cooperation" with NGOs, international organisations, and EU agencies that Frontex staff members repeatedly pointed to is rendered possible because the discursive formations these actors are bound up with are closely interconnected. Not only do humanitarianism, human rights, and security govern populations in space and work as techniques of government, but in doing so, all three formations centrally rely on the identification and categorisation of new

²⁸ The permeability of the boundaries between governmental and nongovernmental spheres in relation to humanitarianism has been commented on by Didier Fassin (2007a).

arrivals. Their common focus and shared understandings enable the emergence of coalitions of actors who variously see their main mandate as the minimisation of risks, the provision of aid to those most in need, or the monitoring of adherence to human rights and refugee law. As this thesis showed, Frontex has been able to forge connections with such diverse actors in part due to its self-representation as a crisis response mechanism, a risk manager, a saviour at sea, and a promoter of fundamental rights.

In sum, Frontex's increasing reliance on the discursive formations of humanitarianism and human rights specifically, and their strengthening in EUropean border governance more generally, have produced the conditions in which new coalitions of actors could emerge. Frontex's presence at the centre of the exhibition at the European Day for Border Guards 2013 described in the introduction, in between the stalls of security industry representatives, those of national border guards, and those of NGOs and international organisations, is indicative of its position as a connection point between these different communities, situated within an interdiscourse that connects and partially blurs the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security. As the agency has increasingly been positioned as a humanitarian and human rights actor, this has opened up new possibilities for partnerships and cooperation.

As noted, this is reflective of developments in the wider border regime, beyond the specific case of Frontex. Ruben Andersson discovered in his fieldwork in Spain that NGOs, border police, and journalists cooperated closely in search and rescue operations and the management of those newly arrived (Andersson 2014, 143). And Claudia Aradau (2008) found that security, humanitarian, and human rights actors worked together in the governance of victims of trafficking. New coalitions of actors have thus been emerging in the border regime more widely, as NGOs, international organisations, and security actors jointly work towards the improvement of border controls. Importantly, however, these coalitions tend to perpetuate an emphasis on 'managing' migration or responding to 'urgent crises', stopping short of challenging fundamental understandings of EUropean external borders as being in need of control – and indeed controllable, as separating an 'us' to be protected from a 'them' that is

partially or potentially threatening (see also Aradau 2008, 89). As such, their cooperation allows for the continued association of migration with the notions of risk and crisis, regardless of the increase in humanitarian and human rights actors and appeals in recent years.

The construction of Frontex as a ‘civilising force’

Beyond positioning Frontex as the ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to various ‘crises’ in border governance, and a connection point between diverse actors in a wider ‘migration management’ approach, the emphasis on human rights and rescue at sea within the agency also has effects on its position in the EUropean border regime, and its relations with member states. By framing its work as saving lives at sea and rescuing vulnerable people from exploitation, Frontex “simultaneously casts itself as a moral actor and protector of human life, securing itself against criticism and strengthening its position as an actor in European border policing” (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 65). It is important to note here that the human rights discourse used by interviewees was closely linked with a discourse of ‘EUropeanness.’ Interviewees from among Frontex staff, its management, and its guest officers claimed that particularly Greece and Bulgaria, and sometimes former communist states more generally, were lacking a tradition and a history of human rights. Scandinavia (particularly Finland) and Germany on the other hand were praised for their rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.²⁹ FR1 stated for instance:

and you know, it’s cultural. I mean there is, without criticising anybody, but there is a difference in... Probably the Finns started training their border guards in the issues relating, you know, fundamental rights in border control, human rights, respect of human rights in border control, probably earlier than Bulgarians (FR1).

²⁹ Similar findings were also made by Aas and Gundhus when interviewing Norwegian officers who worked with Frontex: “Our interviewees frequently invoked differences between East and West, North and South of Europe, and described themselves in terms of their national policing culture which they saw as distinct from, and superior to, other nations” (Aas and Gundhus 2015, 7).

Often, it was implied that peripheral states had some catching up to do, and that Frontex was helping them ‘develop’ in this regard. Several interviewees emphasised that the human rights situation in Greece had improved thanks to Frontex, which had put pressure on the country (see also Aas and Gundhus 2015). While some member states were portrayed as not understanding the importance of respecting human rights, Frontex operations were presented as a way to expose problematic practices.

Framing mostly eastern EUropean states as ‘backwards’ in terms of human rights feeds into a wider discourse that questions the ‘EUropeanness’ of these member states, i.e. their belonging to the more ‘civilised’, ‘developed’ European Union. As Douzinas notes, “the Balkans are approached as peripheral parts of the civilised world, placed in Europe by accident of geography rather than achievement of history or culture” (Douzinas 2007, 74). In this wider discourse, Frontex is constructed as a ‘truly EUropean’ actor, a ‘civilising force’ that brings best practices and standards of human rights also to ‘problematic’ states in the South (and) East. Moreover, it also presents the agency as improving and harmonising standards of border guarding across EUrope:

well I’d say that the operation strategies, the trainings that Frontex does, the question of human rights, how do I implement human rights in operational plans, all the things that the training unit does, has certainly contributed to a higher level in Europe generally, also a higher average level in border protection and a more uniform praxis of controls than we had before (FR9).

By creating the new identity of the ‘civilising force’ for the agency, this narrative strengthens Frontex’s position in the border regime once again. In addition, it also allows Frontex officials to shift blame away from the agency. Interviewees asserted that human rights were not violated during the agency’s own operations, and focused on the promotion of best practices and the setting of standards: “wherever Frontex is it should be the highest standard, I think that’s pretty much understood by everybody, in terms of fundamental rights especially” (FR3).

Those I spoke with made an effort to differentiate between Frontex operations and member state practices, rejecting responsibility for human rights violations during the latter. Several interviewees acknowledged that abuses might be committed by

particular member states outside of Frontex operations, but emphasised that Frontex's work was human rights conform. They pointed to Frontex's limited ability to control member state behaviour, and often said that it was better to have a Frontex presence in 'problematic' states (particularly Greece) than to leave national forces up to their own devices. As one of them stated when asked about human rights, "I can say that the Frontex operations [...] are properly done. Then, the member state issue is a bit more tricky" (FR3). Rather than denying the criticism brought against border guards in EUrope more widely, including reports on beatings, inhumane detention conditions, and illegal push-backs (Amnesty International 2014a, 2014b; Hristova et al. 2014; Human Rights Watch 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011, 2012a), Frontex staff and management distanced the agency from such reports by pointing to the responsibility of member states.

Unsurprisingly, this has led to discontent among some of those affected by criticism, who approached me during a break at the management board meeting. They sought to express their frustration about the fact that Frontex staff had distanced the agency from allegations of fundamental rights abuses by emphasising that no Frontex officers or assets were involved, which country representatives perceived as finger pointing and lack of solidarity. This episode illustrates the fragmented character of Frontex discussed in chapter 5. It also makes clear that Frontex's interests and self-representations do not always match those of the member states. Shifting blame for rights infringements to member states legitimises the agency's activities and produces the new, positive identity of the 'civilising force' for it. In addition, it positions the agency as the 'solution' to human rights violations at EUrope's borders, rather than as a part of the problem. A greater presence of Frontex, when following this framing, should decrease abuse and make EUropean borders more 'humane'. Every new report about violence and push-backs by national border guards would thus have the potential to further strengthen the agency, which could point to its training activities, academies, and its efforts to establish a 'common culture' of border guarding, centrally including respect for fundamental rights. Documentation of the abuse and violence travellers face when attempting to enter EUrope without authorisation could then lead to calls

for more Frontex, rather than a fundamental rethinking of existing practices and policies.

‘Sanitising’ the border regime, externalising violence?

So far, the thesis has primarily focused on the similarities across humanitarian, human rights, and security formations. Nevertheless, there exist also tensions and conflicts between them, which are productive in and of themselves. In this section, I examine some of these tensions, and problematize the effects they might produce. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the following discussion might appear more normative than other parts of this PhD: rather than analysing shifts that have already occurred, I reflect on the potential effects of particular invocations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in EUropean border governance. Viewing migration as primarily a question of security – as is commonly the case – tends to lead to demands to keep migration low or ‘under control’. The ability to do exactly that, however, is limited if human rights and humanitarian principles are strictly adhered to. As Frontex staff told me, if following human rights and refugee law, the agency cannot stop most unauthorised travellers on their way to EUrope, but merely identify them. Legally, individuals can only be denied entry to EU territory at an external border crossing once it has been ascertained that they are not at risk of *refoulement*, which might necessitate individual processing.

As such, strictly adhering to human rights and refugee law curtails Frontex’s (and other security actors’) ability to prevent people from entering EUrope, despite this being precisely what is expected of the agency by some of its stakeholders. Similarly, an insistence on humanitarian principles in border practices could hypothetically make it ‘easier’ for people to arrive in EUrope, simply because sincere and determined search and rescue measures could reduce the extent to which the Mediterranean Sea acts as a space of biopolitical abandonment. While this is still far from a reality, the demands posed vis-à-vis EUropean border guards from a human rights or humanitarian perspective are thus to an extent in tension with demands to keep arrivals low, which

emanate from a security perspective. The debates that took place around Mare Nostrum illustrate this.

Saving thousands of individuals from distress at sea, the humanitarian-military operation also coincided with heightened numbers of arrivals in Italy in 2014 (Frontex 2014j). Accordingly, Italy's right-wing parties described it as a 'pull factor' that encouraged more people to attempt the crossing (ANSA 2014b). The attempt to save those in distress at sea clashed with a widespread desire to keep Europe's doors closed to unauthorised travellers, and led to fierce opposition to Mare Nostrum. Behind the scenes, some Frontex management board members and guest officers expressed similar views, which were also reflected in a leaked concept paper by Frontex (2014g). Italy therefore faced substantial pressures to end the purportedly humanitarian operation. It did not succeed in obtaining EUropean support for the continuation of the mission, nor was the operation replaced by EUropean means, as was requested repeatedly. Instead, Frontex's joint operation Triton was launched. Interim executive director Arias Fernandez acknowledged, "[w]hile Mare Nostrum is clearly a search and rescue operation, Triton will be with the main focus on border control" (Arias Fernandez in the LIBE Committee 2014).

Despite humanitarian appeals to continue search and rescue activities, Mare Nostrum was replaced by an unambiguously security-focused operation, which merely expanded Frontex's previous work in the region. Italy's partially humanitarian operation was seen as leading to an increase in boat arrivals, which was deemed unacceptable, exposing one of the tensions between humanitarian appeals and security concerns. As humanitarianism and human rights grow stronger while migration continues to be seen as a security issue, the desire to keep arrivals low or 'in control' remains strong, while pressures to decrease violence and deaths in EUropean borderlands grow. A greater focus on respecting fundamental rights and humanitarian principles on EUropean territory – without a simultaneous challenge to the assumptions underpinning ongoing security concerns – could therefore lead to the strengthening of divergent demands that seem difficult to reconcile. In Pallister-Wilkins words, "[t]his tension between risk and rescue, this paradox of protection

where the subject [people on the move] must be saved while the object [EUropean territory] is kept safe, therefore, exists in the wider European milieu in which the border guards and Frontex operatives carry out their work” (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 60).

When asking my interviewees about the future of border guarding in EUrope, however, a potential solution to this tension seemed to emerge. Asked about future developments, interviewees often pointed to the importance of improving relationships with third countries and of further externalising border controls. In doing so, they explained that the focus was on ‘preventing’ irregular migration through agreements with third states, so that “the countries of origins’ authorities, let’s say, or actors, make sure that the people migrating choose regular paths” (FR6). Importantly, I do not suggest here that externalisation is the conscious response of those working for Frontex to the tensions that exist between humanitarianism, human rights, and security. In fact, there is a wider and longer-standing drive towards externalisation among EU policymakers and institutions, which was referenced also in the interviews:

I think now the trend is to externalise more and more border control. I mean, to put it more and more far away from the physical border. This is the trend now and it’s, it has a very strong political content behind. I mean it’s not this agency or the border guards that are going to develop such system. It has a very strong political component that you can put the control of your borders more and more far away of the physical borders (FR2).

Nevertheless, it is worth remarking that externalising border controls could potentially reconcile the divergent demands of humanitarianism, human rights, and security. This is the case in particular where humanitarian and human rights appeals are focused on EUropean borderlands and border guards. Outsourcing the violence, exclusion, and discrimination inherent in the current border regime to third states could coexist with a simultaneous push to ‘sanitise’ EUropean borderlands from violence and deaths. Externalising border controls could hypothetically allow for respecting humanitarian principles and human rights on EUropean soil, while cooperation agreements could ensure the increasing ‘prevention’ of attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea, keeping arrivals in EUrope low. Similarly, Pallister-Wilkins argues that externalisation can be

understood as “an attempt to reconcile the tensions between a humanitarian border policing where the individual is the subject and the need to defend territory where the territory is the object” (Pallister-Wilkins 2015, 65).

Rather than describing causality or intentionality, my remarks here are intended to offer some reflections on the potentialities of contemporary articulations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in the EUropean border regime. Almost 10 years ago, Sandra Lavenex (2006, 2007) described the inclusion of EUropean immigration control in foreign policy as a continuation of attempts by immigration ministers to increase their autonomy vis-à-vis normative, institutional, and political constraints. She built on previous work showing how increasing constraints on immigration policymaking posed by national constitutions, humanitarian discourses, courts, and ministries led to immigration ministers seeking to EUropeanise these matters (Guiraudon 2000; Lavenex 2001). As constraints grew stronger on a EUropean level, this created an interest in externalising these policies, incorporating them in relations with third states. Already then, the constraints on policymaking that were sought to be avoided included human rights obligations. It is not difficult to imagine that a strengthening of the discursive formations of humanitarianism and human rights in the EUropean border regime might provide new impetus to already existing externalisation processes.

In addition to potentially resolving tensions between the demands associated with security, humanitarianism, and human rights on EUropean territory, externalising border controls projects EUropean power outwards, and extends EUropean influence to a ‘buffer zone’ around member states. The process of externalisation re-enacts previously existing power inequalities and dependencies between EUrope and its southern neighbours, “reproduc[ing] recent colonial relations of dependency” (Balibar 2009, 203). A member of the management board revealed that some within the agency are aware of the cost this might inflict on would-be-travellers:

FR9: We can of course send liaison officers to third states, who attempt to prevent migration from there. Although as said before, we only prevent the running away then. We don’t work on the causes. [...]

Interviewer: If you say it like that, it seems pretty apparent that [...] the costs for hindering migration effectively will be extremely high, if the causes of migration are not addressed at the same time. Both financial costs and human costs...

FR9: That will be the case; that will be the case.

Externalising controls is thus not envisioned to reduce violence in the border regime, but to move it beyond EUropean external borders. As past cooperation agreements have shown, violence might intensify in third countries, while being removed from the EUropean public's view at the same time. Cooperation agreements with countries in North Africa, particularly Libya, have been described as the creation of “‘off-shore’ black holes where European norms, standards and regulations simply do not apply” (Bialasiewicz 2012, 861; see also Buckel and Wissel 2010, 40). This exposes a fundamental limitation of many efforts to improve EUropean border controls: appeals to respect human rights and to save lives at sea are primarily directed at EUropean governments and policymakers. Human rights especially are territorial despite their almost universal appeal, relying on authorities within a particular jurisdiction to respect and enforce them. When border controls and the accompanying violence and exclusion are outsourced to third countries, EUropean states cease to be responsible for rights infringements in legal terms. While externalisation stands in tension with a comprehensive conception of travellers as rights holders, including the right to leave any country and the right to seek asylum (UDHR, Art. 13(2) and Art. 14(1)), it shifts the responsibility for rights infringements to third states.

When conceptualising discursive formations as performative, it is important to recognise that they might have effects that exceed the intentions of those mobilising them. In this section, I argued that humanitarian and human rights appeals that remain focused on EUropean actors, and stop short of challenging the assumption that migration is a security issue and arrivals therefore need to be limited and controlled, risk merely ‘sanitising’ EUropean borderlands. In doing so, they are not only unlikely to be able to counter already-existing processes towards externalisation, but might even provide new impetus for them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored some of the effects of the increase in humanitarian and human rights references in Frontex's self-portrayals, and in EUropean border governance more widely. In doing so, I argued that these two developments have strengthened Frontex's position in the EUropean border regime in a variety of ways. Initially, I argued that the coexistence of 'crisis' and 'risk management' approaches within Frontex is productive, allowing the agency to respond to divergent external demands, and feeding into each other in its practices. Furthermore, I showed that the crisis narratives that prevail in contemporary border governance enmesh humanitarian, human rights, and security concerns, and thereby contribute to the further entanglement of the three discursive formations. In relation to Frontex more specifically, I argued that the intertwining of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in its self-representations has positioned the agency as the almost automatic 'solution' to diverse 'crises' in EUropean border governance, strengthening it in terms of resources as well as legitimacy.

Moreover, this chapter argued that the discursive similarities between humanitarianism, human rights, and security have created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of new coalitions of actors in EUropean border governance. As humanitarianism and human rights have grown stronger over the last years, state and security actors have appropriated them. This enabled divergent actors to identify common goals, and to work towards achieving them together both in responding to 'crises', and in 'managing' new arrivals. The Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights is an example of a new coalition that focuses on making existing procedures human rights conform, legitimising them in the process. Within these coalitions, fundamental assumptions such as the need to control borders are not questioned, as the common focus is on urgent responses, or improving the management and categorisation of new arrivals. Importantly, this risks reifying not only highly problematic categories of 'economic migrants' vs. 'refugees', but also the 'othering' of those to be managed more generally, as they are constructed and governed as 'passive victims' and 'risky subjects' at the same time.

In a third section, I examined the connection between the human rights narrative invoked by Frontex officials and a wider discourse on ‘EUropeanness’, which questions the belonging of Southern (and) Eastern member states to the EUropean community. In this narrative, Frontex is constructed as a ‘civilising force’ that spreads ‘best practices’ from EUrope’s North West to ‘less developed’ countries. As such, I argued that Frontex’s appropriation of fundamental rights has strengthened the agency also by allowing it to be positioned as a ‘truly EUropean’ actor. In this role, Frontex supports ‘less advanced’ member states by teaching them human rights, and by (indirectly) monitoring their practices through its operations. Lastly, I cautioned that the entanglement of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in EUropean border governance more widely might provide new impetus for an externalisation of border controls. Where human rights and humanitarian appeals focus on ‘sanitising’ EUropean borderlands without challenging the fundamental assumptions persisting as part of a wider discursive formation of security, this could contribute to the outsourcing of the violence that a highly exclusionary border regime aiming to keep arrival numbers low ultimately relies on.

Conclusion

This thesis explored the relationship of the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in the self-representations of the EUropean border agency Frontex. In doing so, it sought to make a number of contributions. Not only did it present novel empirical data on the negotiation of humanitarianism, human rights, and security within Frontex's documents, and by those working for and with the agency, it also made theoretical and methodological contributions to the fields of critical security studies, critical migration and border studies, and organisational sociology, by bringing these three fields into conversation with one another. In this final chapter, I will revisit the research questions that guided this project from the beginning. By summarising some of the main findings and arguments made in the previous chapters and relating them back to the research questions, I will also reflect on the contributions offered to existing scholarship and debates.

Reflections on humanitarianism, human rights, and security

As outlined in the introduction, at the beginning of this doctoral project stood my curiosity vis-à-vis the use of humanitarian and human rights language in Frontex's public statements and documents, alongside a continued focus on migration as a security issue. As such, I set out to explore the question: *how do humanitarianism, human rights, and security relate to each other, and to governing EUropean borders?* By reflecting on humanitarianism, human rights, and security individually, and on their interrelationships in EUropean border governance more generally, I proposed conceptualising them as three distinct but closely connected discursive formations, which have become increasingly entangled in a wider interdiscourse of migration control. This understanding highlights both the different historical context and contemporary implications of each of the discursive formations, and simultaneously shows their close connections in governing populations.

While humanitarianism and human rights are often seen as oppositional to security, this thesis has drawn on and contributed to literatures identifying their similarities and connections in governing populations. In particular, I have highlighted that in their articulations in contemporary border governance, each of the formations ‘others’ people on the move, works through biopolitical and disciplinary techniques of government, and reinforces the power of (especially Western) states. In the discursive formation of security, individuals are designated as ‘threats’ to or ‘risks’ for diverse referent objects (including the economy, public health, public safety, morality, culture, identity, and so on). Humanitarianism and human rights produce the position of the ‘victim’, which is looked down upon, and is in a hierarchical relationship with a ‘saviour’. The figures of the ‘victim’ and the ‘threat’ are racialized as non-white, and have become central to how ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’ are imagined in contemporary EUrope. Groups or individuals can occupy these subject positions simultaneously, or transition from one to the other: each of the subject positions is unstable, and a ‘victim’ can quickly transform into a ‘threat’ (and vice versa) if not conforming to particular behaviours, arriving via a particularly deadly route, or if arriving at the same time as many others.

The three discursive formations discussed in this thesis furthermore govern through biopolitical and disciplinary techniques of government. All categorise people into ‘good’ or ‘bad’ border crossers: trusted travellers vs. unauthorised entrants; refugees entitled to rights vs. deportable others; those deserving of aid vs. those who are considered to be undeserving. Populations are governed in space, with particular contexts and locations becoming central for accessing rights or aid for ‘victims’, or alternatively to the confinement of ‘threats’. At times, these places become one and the same, as detention centres in the UK and other countries illustrate: asylum seekers who enter the procedure to have their right to remain in e.g. the UK assessed can be detained during the process, and are placed in the same facilities as those who are deemed ‘undesirable’ and are sought to be deported. Lastly, the three formations reinforce and legitimise the power of, primarily, Western states vis-à-vis their own populations, and vis-à-vis other states in the international order. Rather than

fundamentally challenging the exclusions created by sovereign states – which rely on a division between those ruled, those ruling, and those excluded – humanitarianism appeals for pity and mercy on behalf of (some of) those excluded, and administers aid to them. The discursive formation of human rights is intricately bound up with statehood, as states are deemed to be the actors best capable of protecting human rights. The formation of security commonly includes the sovereign state as a key referent object to be protected from outside threats, and relies on state power to address such threats. In addition, humanitarianism, human rights, and security have all been drawn on to justify and legitimate powerful states' interventions in other states, which are declared a danger to international security, and / or to their own populations. Despite their differences, the discursive formations of humanitarianism, human rights, and security thus share a number of important commonalities with one another, which have created the conditions of possibility for their entanglement in contemporary EUropean border governance.

These conceptual reflections constitute the basis of this thesis, and build on as well as speak to debates on the relationship between war, violence, humanitarianism, and human rights. They synthesize a diverse body of scholarship and relate it to the context of EUropean border governance, showing how debates around humanitarianism, human rights, militarism, violence, and security relate to contemporary processes in the EUropean border regime. In doing so, they contribute to the fields of critical migration and border studies and critical security studies, offering a way of thinking about ongoing processes in EUropean border governance without ascribing one overarching or necessarily dominant rationality. By conceptualising humanitarianism, human rights, and security as distinct discursive formations that are closely bound up with one another in a wider interdiscourse of migration control, the practices of border governance can be reflected on in their complexities. Rather than resorting to narratives on 'rhetoric vs. reality' or merely understanding humanity-centred concerns as ineffectual by-products of an overarching governmentality of risk, this conceptualisation opens up space for critical reflections on the intricate connections of

and frequent transitions between the three discursive formations in contemporary border governance, without overly simplifying it.

Three perspectives on Frontex: research with access limitations

Building on these conceptual reflections, I argued that the close connections between the three discursive formations have enabled state and security actors to incorporate humanitarianism and human rights in their self-representations and in public debates, without this threatening their identities or basic assumptions. Looking at the example of Frontex, I set out to address the second research question: *how does Frontex negotiate humanitarianism, human rights, and security in its self-representation, and how has this changed over time?* Rather than providing a single, comprehensive account of Frontex and its gradual appropriation of humanitarian and human rights language in response to this, the thesis offered three ways of knowing the agency. In part, the reason for doing this was pragmatic: given that my research access was limited, I decided to pursue various ways of collecting data and trying to understand Frontex's shift towards humanitarianism and human rights language. By looking at the agency's founding history, analysing its publications, and conducting interviews and participant observation, I sought to address the limitations that access difficulties might pose to the research, in particular given my position as an outsider. Each of the three perspectives presented in this thesis offers a different way of knowing Frontex, and of conceptualising its recent changes. Each of them is necessarily partial, and provides just one part of what is a much larger picture. Relying on different research methods, sources, and sites, each perspective also calls for an explicit reflection on what it has to offer, and where its limitations lie.

When understanding Frontex through scholarly work and policy documents relating to the agency's foundation, it emerges primarily as a compromise between various actors' interests. This founding history provides valuable insights in relation to how Frontex is being governed today, with member states and Commission representatives playing a key role in controlling the agency, but also the European Parliament holding

considerable power over it. It also provides a way of making sense of the different rationalities that were inscribed in the agency from its very beginning: a conceptualisation of security as entailing urgent responses to ‘crises’ which coexisted and at times competed with an understanding of security as risk management (i.e. as entailing analysis, pre-planning, and preparation). When following this perspective, moreover, Frontex’s appropriation of humanitarianism and human rights might be interpreted as a reflection of or response to the strengthening of the European Parliament in EUropean policymaking as the Lisbon Treaty entered into force. Examining Frontex through its founding history thus highlights the agency’s contested nature, the multiplicity of interests it was intended to serve, as well as the range of actors it remains accountable to. It however fails to engage with the organisational dynamics and complexities of Frontex itself, including how the agency actively manoeuvres its position as one actor in a contested border regime.

Analysing Frontex’s public documents provides insights into how humanitarianism, human rights and security have been enmeshed in the self-representations of the agency, highlighting how they have become articulated in narratives produced about Frontex, migration, and border controls. I have shown how Frontex progressively incorporated humanitarianism and human rights in addition to a continued emphasis on migration as a risk and a threat in its annual reports and press releases since 2008. While the first three years of Frontex’s existence saw the absence of references to human rights, and only selective references to saving lives, humanitarianism and human rights have gradually been mainstreamed throughout Frontex’s annual reports and press releases since 2011. In addition, the agency’s publications have increasingly relied on the widely known discursive narratives of the ‘unscrupulous smuggler’ and ‘fraudulent asylum seeker’, in which humanitarianism, human rights, and security concerns converge. In sum, understanding Frontex through an analysis of its press releases and reports illustrates how the agency has gradually been constructed as a promoter of rights, protector of vulnerable people, manager of risks, and defender of EUrope in times of crisis. It produces knowledge on how Frontex has been positioned publicly and how its documents have negotiated the different discursive formations

through time, but stops short of engaging with those working for and with the organisation themselves. In doing so, this way of understanding Frontex relies entirely on an outside perspective, and has the tendency to portray the agency as a unitary actor.

Moving from public documents to interviews, informal conversations, and observations, a new institutionalist analysis offers a partial view from the inside, if necessarily incomplete due to my position as an outsider and the limited research access I could secure. Despite these limitations, the collected data captures an important part of Frontex's organisational dynamics, highlighting contradictions and incoherencies between its staff, guest officers, and management. It shows that Frontex is not a coherent, rational organisation, and that discrepancies between understandings of border guarding exist between those involved in different aspects of the agency's work, including regarding the relevance of humanitarianism and human rights in EUropean border guarding. At the same time, this perspective does not provide for an analysis of the discursive relationships between the formations that Frontex staff and management draw on, and is limited in the understandings it can offer of the agency's wider environment.

Taken together, the three perspectives offer multifaceted insights into Frontex's negotiation of humanitarianism, human rights, and security, and show how engagement with the three discursive formations in agency publications changed over time. They depict Frontex as an actor embedded in a complex network of EU institutions and member states, which the agency is accountable to and partially controlled by. At the same time, they show that rather than being entirely determined by this position, Frontex's staff and management actively negotiate external demands in various ways. Incorporating humanitarian and human rights language in public documents and statements, while insisting on the centrality of Frontex's security mandate at the same time, has been one way of responding to external pressures.

By combining different methods, sources, and sites, the thesis has provided novel empirical information about Frontex and the self-representations of those working for the agency, contributing to critical border and migration studies and critical security studies. While Frontex is a widely known and much-discussed actor in these fields,

there has been only limited direct engagement with agency staff and management thus far. Combining ‘nonlocal’ ethnography with organisational analysis in producing these insights, the thesis moreover offers a way of transposing Feldman’s (2012) observations and methodological reflections regarding EUropean policymaking networks to researching individual (security) organisations that provide only limited research access. In doing so, it demonstrates the usefulness of an open-ended, experimentalist and diversified research design. Importantly, the approach taken also shows that (partial) organisational analyses can provide valuable insights even where full access to an organisation cannot be secured. As limited access is the norm within the security field, it is important to note that organisational research and analysis – especially when combined with other approaches – can provide meaningful insights also in this research area.

Bringing organisational dynamics into critical security studies

When analysing the data collected through interviews, informal conversations, and observations, the thesis exposed divergences in interpretations and self-representations between Frontex’s headquarters, guest officers working in its operations, and different members of its management board. These insights challenge conceptualisations of Frontex as a unitary and rational actor, and suggest that the agency might be more appropriately understood as a loosely coupled organisation within a contradictory and ambiguous environment. Drawing on organisational sociology, I argued that incoherencies within the agency can constitute a reasonable way of dealing with contradictory demands from the outside, or of reconciling external demands with internal interpretations of efficiency and professionalism: they do not necessarily entail intentional deception or even organisational failure by the agency. Instead of examining how and why Frontex as a whole has appropriated humanitarianism and human rights, this analysis thus suggests that different parts of the agency have engaged with the three discursive formations to varying extents. By presenting a range of self-representations and views by guest officers, staff, and management that elude

any singular rationality of government, the thesis problematized the attribution of an overarching goal or rationality to Frontex. While it suggested that humanitarian and human rights language was partially incorporated in agency publications in response to outside pressures, the thesis simultaneously challenged a purely instrumentalist understanding of these developments.

In doing so, the thesis contributed to the study of security organisations, in particular when following a so-called ‘Paris School’ approach. In existing accounts, diverse security professionals are understood to share particular knowledges within a relatively closed and often secretive community of insiders. They occupy positions of authority due to their status as ‘experts’, and can make claims about threats and risks without having to provide evidence for them. Inter-organisational competition is understood as a key driver of developments in the wider security field. In this field, various security actors compete over threat and risk definitions as well as resources, each seeking to maximise its own power and authority in the process. Changes and developments are field effects of diverse actors’ interests and actions, rather than the results of a premeditated plan (Bigo 2002a, 2006). As the thesis has shown, this conceptualisation can be meaningfully complemented with analyses of intra-organisational dynamics.

First, this thesis and the organisational work it draws on have shown that an understanding of security actors as merely power-maximising is overly simplistic. While security organisations might be relatively inaccessible to outsiders as suggested by ‘Paris School’ accounts, organisational sociology suggests that they will likely seek to respond to demands from their environment if they perceive their legitimacy or resources to be threatened. Frontex staff and management often expressed concerns regarding the agency’s perception from the outside, and viewed the organisation as dependent on a variety of stakeholders (including the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the member states) for legitimacy and resources. In fact, some of the interviewees were worried about the agency’s quick expansion in terms of its tasks and mandate, and were expressing a wish for a period of consolidation rather than further growth. This illustrates that within Frontex, concerns do not only focus on

maximising power or competences, but are more diversified. Indeed, organisational sociology suggests that organisations are primarily preoccupied with securing legitimacy from their environment, which includes attempts to reconcile conflicting expectations and pressures emanating from it. As the thesis has shown, this is arguably a more appropriate way of conceptualising organisational motivations than a simple focus on power maximisation. While an organisation (or some of its staff and management) might develop an understanding of itself as involved in a competitive struggle for power against other security actors, this is not necessarily the case and cannot be taken as a given.

Second, the thesis has argued that those working for and with Frontex engage with humanitarianism and human rights to very different extents. Thereby, it has challenged suggestions that (all) security professionals are unmoved by or indifferent to ‘alternative discourses’ such as humanitarianism and human rights, and has provided a more nuanced account of Frontex’s positioning towards these discursive formations, and towards its environment more generally. By challenging prevailing conceptualisations of security agencies as coherent, rational actors, the thesis thus contributed to ‘Paris School’ approaches in a second way. It showed that taking organisational dynamics seriously reveals a more diverse, fragmented and potentially contradictory picture of security organisations’ motivations, behaviours, and understandings. More specifically, the thesis has shown that responses to external pressures do not always need to affect the entire organisation, or change existing structures. Decoupling different parts of the organisation from one another, or decoupling outward rhetoric from internal structures and procedures can be a reasonable way to respond to external pressures, especially if these are contradictory or in tension with interpretations established inside the organisation. While such fragmentation is more apparent within other EU institutions, such as the European Parliament or the Council, the thesis showed that also relatively small agencies such as Frontex cannot be assumed to be unitary or coherent. The concept of decoupling thus helps to conceptualise change and continuity in relation to security actors. It enables the analyst to understand contradictory practices, or divergences between

public statements and practices, without having to resort to notions that imply a centrally determined intentionality, such as ‘deception’. By bringing critical security studies, critical migration and border studies, and organisational sociology into conversation with one another, the thesis argued that organisational dynamics can add a layer of analysis to prevailing accounts of dynamics within the EUropean border regime, complementing them meaningfully.

Implications for activism, politics, and critical scholarship

The final question that this thesis set out to address was: *what are the effects of Frontex’s changes in self-representation on the agency and its position in the border regime?* I reflected on this question in chapter 6, drawing on Judith Butler’s understanding of discursive performativity. In doing so, I examined Frontex’s continued reliance on crisis as well as risk management narratives, which – as noted above – were inscribed in the agency already from its foundation. I showed that both crisis narratives and risk management have become enmeshed with the discursive formations of humanitarianism and human rights, which produces particular effects. Arguing that invocations of crises and a focus on risk management are not necessarily at odds with one another, but can inform and even feed into each other, I suggested that Frontex’s position in the EUropean border regime has been (re-)asserted and strengthened through both narratives.

By presenting itself as saviour of people in distress at sea, promoter of fundamental rights, and defender of EUrope in times of unexpected threats, Frontex has become positioned as the solution to diverse ‘crises’. It has seen budget increases in relation to events framed as humanitarian as well as border control ‘crises’, and has become the almost automatic solution to diverse ‘problems’ emerging in the EUropean border regime. Simultaneously, it has contributed to the blurring of and transitioning between different discursive formations: Frontex (among other actors) has responded to ‘humanitarian crises’ with ‘security measures,’ i.e. practices aiming to restrict unauthorised mobility and criminalising those facilitating it.

Humanitarianism, human rights, and security do not only converge in crisis narratives, however, but also in narratives on routine migration (and risk) management. They share a common focus on the identification and classification of individuals according to needs, rights, and risks posed. This focus as well as Frontex's self-representation as a humanitarian, human rights, and security actor have allowed for the emergence of new coalitions in the EUropean border regime. Indeed, Frontex's decoupling of various aspects of its work has enabled the agency to cooperate closely with a wide variety of actors, ranging from the arms and security industry to national border guards to EUropean bureaucrats, politicians, and NGOs and international organisations.

When I began working on this thesis, I had a two-fold aim: on the one hand, I set out to explore Frontex's shift to humanitarianism and human rights from an academic perspective, hoping to contribute new empirical and theoretical insights to the fields of critical border and migration studies and critical security studies. On the other hand, I wanted to reflect on the entanglement of humanitarianism, human rights, and security from the point of view of somebody who seeks to challenge exclusionary, violent, and often deadly bordering practices. Deeply disturbed by contemporary EUropean bordering policies and practices, I wanted to think through the intricate relationships between humanitarianism, human rights, and security, examine Frontex's appropriation of the former two, and expose some of the effects of this appropriation in the EUropean border regime more widely.

In doing so, the question of what these reflections and findings mean for activism, for politics, and for critical scholarship emerges centrally. I argued that Frontex has become positioned as a 'civilising force' in EUrope, shifting responsibility for human rights abuses to 'problematic' member states in the South (and) East and affirming its identity as promoting and monitoring the adherence to 'EUropean' values across the territory. In addition, I made some tentative observations regarding potential future developments. In particular, I suggested that calling for adherence to humanitarian principles and human rights standards by EUropean border guards could end up providing increased momentum for already-existing processes of externalisation, if

such calls do not challenge the fundamental assumption that arrival numbers need to remain low, and remain focused on EUrope.

What this means, then, is that relying on humanitarianism and human rights uncritically as a way to challenge and oppose current bordering practices could be counterproductive in some instances. The intertwining of the three discursive formations has created new openings for practices that rely on a conceptualisation of migration as a risk or a threat: I have shown that scandalising deaths in the Mediterranean by invoking a humanitarian crisis could lead to more restrictive practices as a form of ‘crisis response,’ likely leading to more deaths, and that emphases on identifying people in need or protecting refugee rights might further a managerial approach that ‘others’ newcomers and affirms an understanding of migration as a phenomenon to be dealt with through risk management. In addition, I have argued that scandalising rights violations in particular member states might lead to calls for ‘more Frontex’ in order to enable the agency to monitor and improve the situation in ‘problematic’ countries.

While all of these potentialities remain no more than this, possibilities rather than necessities, they show that even in mobilising humanitarianism and human rights specifically for the purpose of critiquing the status quo, it is possible to feed into and further strengthen the two modes of enacting insecurity discussed in this thesis. Given the intertwining of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in contemporary EUropean border governance, can humanitarianism and / or human rights remain useful vehicles to challenge restrictive practices? As media outlets, journalists, and academics keep producing images of death and despair from EUropean borderlands, the need for change is more than clear. Reports of thousands of individuals dying *en route* to EUrope within the first half of this year alone are prompting renewed calls for change grounded in humanitarianism and human rights.

What this thesis aimed to show is that such calls often fail to fundamentally challenge existing frameworks, and might inadvertently serve to legitimise and reinforce restrictive practices. While action in light of ongoing deaths and dismal conditions in camps across and beyond EUrope is needed, improvements in search and rescue

practices or living conditions alone will fail to provide the solution for problems that are intricately connected to political inequalities, neo-colonial dependencies and structures, and enduring racism. Indeed, calling for urgent action to save lives or protect rights should not deflect our attention from asking questions on a more fundamental level, and for demanding radical change. Rather than focusing on ‘sanitising’ EUropean borderlands from violence, abuse, and death, it remains important to question what the conception of humanity underlying current and proposed practices is: to whom, when, and where does it (not) apply?

Opening up space for reflection on and challenges to the meaning and significance of ‘the human’, and insisting on bringing politics back into calls for change is necessary to break the continuum of human rights, humanitarianism, and security. Similarly, a critical rethinking of the relationship between humanity, sovereignty, borders, and violence is needed. Rather than giving up on the ambivalent discursive formations of humanitarianism and human rights, it is important to critically and creatively re-engage with them. If taken seriously, such a re-engagement cannot end with calls for the proper implementation of rights or for the alleviation of some forms of human suffering. Instead, it “must address the question of how to remake and improve Europe’s relationships with its unwanted settler-migrants, refugees, denizens and illegals: all those racial and civilizational inferiors judged inhuman, whose lives are accorded a diminished value even when they fall inside the elastic bounds of the law” (Gilroy 2014, 147). Remaking this relationship requires a move beyond appeals seeking to re-humanise current practices and policies, or attempting to encourage a more consistent implementation of existing laws.

It also means moving beyond political mobilisation on behalf of voiceless victims, and working through and with the power differentials inherent in the struggle against exclusion, racism, and discrimination. Once again, the developments of the last 18 months have shown that it is by no means the European Commission, Frontex, or EUropean political leaders more widely who one-sidedly determine developments in the realm of migration and mobility. People on the move themselves have defied the laws and practices seeking to exclude them, claimed the right to access EUrope, and

often succeeded in travelling to their destination countries in spite of manifold physical and legal barriers seeking to block them from doing so. They have exposed deep divisions between European policymakers, who scrambled for responses to this seemingly ungovernable mobility. In doing so, they have demonstrated that moments of “autonomy of migration” persist in the face of stringent controls and securitisation (see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008; Scheel 2013).

It is crucial that this agency and defiance is recognised also by those seeking to support border crossers, whether through academic writings or practical solidarity actions. One (refugee) activist said this February at a conference in Hamburg: “I don’t want somebody to support my fight. I want left-wing activists to fight their fights, and I fight my fight, and when we meet on an equal footing, we fight together” (cited in Schipkowski 2016). Rather than perpetuating patronising appeals on behalf of suffering others, political opposition to current border policies and practices needs to take politics, power, and positionality seriously, challenging structures of exclusion, marginalisation, and hierarchisation within the border regime and beyond European territory as well as in social movements. When doing so, it can open up space for reflection and (self-)critique, and might allow for identifying moments in which the dominant humanity-security continuum proliferating in contemporary European border governance can be disrupted or subverted.

Epilogue

With the fast-paced events taking place in 2015 and 2016, the end of data collection for this thesis on 31/12/2014 seems rather distant as I am writing this epilogue in July 2016. There have been record numbers of arrivals in EUrope last year, with 850,000 people having entered Greece by boat, in addition to 150,000 arriving in Italy by boat (UNHCR 2016). The responses were diverse and often chaotic, both in the countries of first arrival and in those further along the routes of individuals seeking safety and stability. We have seen, once again, staggering numbers of deaths in the Mediterranean, with more than 3,770 deaths last year, and already 3,034 deaths by July 25, 2016 (IOM 2016). While there has been an unprecedented mobilisation of volunteers, activists, and NGOs to assist new arrivals in various EUropean countries, there have also been increased numbers of violent attacks on them.

The political response across EUrope has often appeared uncoordinated and ad-hoc, with policymakers scrambling to respond to new developments as they arose. Fences have sprung up across EUrope, and security concerns have emerged centre-stage in some of the debates around a EUropean response to the “crisis”. With the closure of the Macedonian border and the emphasis on deportation and detention within the EU-Turkey deal, the situation looks bleak for those trapped in Turkey, Greece, Syria, and other countries without much hope for rebuilding their lives. In light of this rapidly changing context, do the analysis and arguments this thesis has presented based on data between 2005 and 2014 still matter? It is impossible, within this Epilogue, to adequately comment on all of the events that have taken place since January 2015. Focusing on a selection of them, in particular the specific debates around Frontex, however, illustrates that my arguments remain relevant beyond the specific temporal limit of the analysis undertaken.

After the death of more than 800 individuals in a single incident on 18 April 2015 – a month that saw over 1240 lives lost in the Mediterranean Sea – EUropean leaders reiterated their commitment to reduce deaths at sea (European Council 2015; European Parliament 2015b). A Special European Council Meeting was convened on April 23,

which as its first measure decided to triple Frontex's budget for joint operations Triton and Poseidon. This decision can be partially understood as a response to Frontex's positioning as a humanitarian actor: as argued in the thesis, this self-representation has allowed the agency to become a 'go-to' solution for deaths at sea. In May 2015, the European Commission launched "A European Agenda on Migration" in response to what it described as shortfalls of collective European migration policies. It proposed a range of measures, including immediate actions and more long-term proposals. The actions to be undertaken without delay included, among others, closer cooperation between Frontex and Europol in order to address smuggling and the establishment of "Hotspots", in which EASO, Frontex, Eurojust, and Europol work together to facilitate the swift processing of new arrivals in "frontline Member States", including their mandatory fingerprinting "in full respect of fundamental rights" (European Commission 2015b, 6; 13).

The Commission's proposal to enhance cooperation on smuggling between Europol and Frontex relies on and further strengthens the narrative of the 'unscrupulous smuggler', suggesting that a fight against the facilitators of dangerous crossings will alleviate the suffering of those seeking to reach Europe as well as decreasing arrival numbers, and bringing together humanitarian and security rationales: "[a]ction to fight criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers is first and foremost a way to prevent the exploitation of migrants by criminal networks. It would also act as a disincentive to irregular migration" (European Commission 2015b, 8). Also in the newly established Hotspots, the governmental rationalities that are at work within humanitarianism, human rights, and security converge. New arrivals are filtered according to their presumed humanitarian needs, their status as rights holders, and the potential threat they might be posing, and are designated as removable if they fall outside of specific categories. Four EU agencies cooperate in the determination of individuals' identities and categorisation, before then processing them according to the attributed status. The close cooperation of four agencies with different remits (crime; asylum; border control) in the Hotspots can be seen as another example of the

coalitions of diverse actors emerging to jointly respond to humanitarian, human rights, and security concerns at EUropean borders, as discussed in chapter 6.

At the same time, the agencies also “help [“frontline Member States”] to fulfil their obligations under EU law and swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants” (European Commission 2015c). This “help” is not necessarily only to be understood in benevolent terms, but is connected to beliefs that Italy and Greece do not live up to EUropean standards and expectations regarding the registration of new arrivals, first and foremost by not fingerprinting them systematically enough.³⁰ In February 2016, the Commission published “Progress Reports” on the implementation of policy measures within the “European Agenda on Migration” in Italy and Greece, reflecting in this very term the presumed need for these two countries to progress to a more advanced, EUropean standard of border guarding (European Commission 2016b). Among other issues, the reports described a dramatic increase in fingerprinting rates for both countries (European Commission 2016c, 2016d). Together with other agencies, Frontex has thus been called on as one of the actors spreading and simultaneously monitoring the adherence to standards and procedures in Italy and Greece, which feeds into its positioning as a ‘civilising force’ not only in relation to human rights adherence, but also regarding ‘best practices’ more widely.

In December 2015, the Commission moreover proposed to establish a common European Border and Coast Guard, and repealing Frontex’s founding regulation. Some key changes to this expansion of Frontex would include its ability to act without the consent of member states where they are unable or unwilling to control external borders effectively, thereby further reinforcing the agency’s role as a ‘civilising force’ spreading EUropean standards to ‘problematic’ member states. In addition, it is suggested that the revamped agency would have an explicit mandate to work in third

³⁰ Whether or not individuals are fingerprinted matters profoundly due to the Dublin Regulation that sets out that the EU country an individual first set foot in is responsible for processing their asylum application (European Parliament and Council 2013). Without being fingerprinted, individuals have greater possibilities to travel on to Northern / Western EU countries to apply for asylum there, without facing the same threat of being deported back to the country where they entered the EU.

countries, which would reinforce externalisation processes and likely allow the European Border and Coast Guard to play a more active role in advancing them. It would also be obliged to institute a complaints mechanism allowing individuals whose rights have been violated in joint operations to complain to the Fundamental Rights Officer, strengthening the agency's oversight function vis-à-vis member states' border guards. Further envisaged changes include greater powers in relation to return operations; integrating the cooperation of coastguards and border guards; and a mandate on internal security with a specific focus on preventing terrorism (European Commission 2015a, 2015d). In addition,

[t]he objectives of a joint operation or rapid border intervention may be achieved as part of a multipurpose operation which may involve the rescue of persons in distress at sea or other coast guard functions, the fight against migrant smuggling or trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking control operations, and migration management including identification, registration, debriefing and return (European Commission 2015a, Article 14(5)).

As such, humanitarianism, human rights, and security objectives could be merged in multi-purpose operations conducted by the agency, explicitly designed to jointly address these diverse concerns. This would be a move away from operations that thus far have been exclusively mandated with border security, and have conducted search and rescue activities where called upon by member states rather than planning and deploying joint operations with rescue as an objective. It would, if agreed upon and implemented, take the entanglement of all three discursive formations in EUropean border practices to another level, further intensifying existing developments and strengthening the agency's contribution to the continued blurring of humanitarianism, human rights, and security in border practices.

In the eighteen months since data collection for this thesis ended, the blurring of humanitarianism, human rights, and security has, if anything, become more intense, and Frontex's role has been strengthened both in response to deaths at sea, and to increased arrival numbers. Far from only consolidating its humanitarian and human rights character, the last months have once again seen a growing emphasis on security

concerns, which the agency is similarly positioned as a solution to. This is reflected also in the recent Commission proposal, which foresees the European Border and Coast Guard acquiring additional competences in the fight against terrorism within EUrope. In order to allow the agency to implement both new and old tasks, the Commission proposes to increase its budget from the €143 million originally allocated to Frontex in 2015 (before the tripling of its resources for joint operations Poseidon and Triton) to €238 million in 2016 and €281 million in 2017, reaching €322 million by 2020, and suggests increasing the agency's staff members from 402 in early 2016 to 1,000 by 2020 (European Commission 2015e). As deaths at sea and arrival numbers in EUrope have reached new record levels, 'more Frontex' has been envisioned as the solution to security, humanitarianism, and human rights concerns. Importantly, recent developments have also shown clearly that humanitarianism and human rights coexist alongside a continued security focus, which has grown stronger again in recent months. In the new proposal, Frontex – potentially soon the European Border and Coast Guard – would become even better positioned to respond to human rights violations by border guards as much as deaths at sea and increased arrival numbers, potentially further reasserting its position as a security-cum-humanitarian-cum-human-rights actor in the process.

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