

**INTERROGATION OF A PASSPORT TO EXPLORE  
FURTHER DESIGN IMPLICATIONS ON 3D RENDERING SOFTWARES**

by

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# INTERROGATION OF A PASSPORT TO EXPLORE FURTHER DESIGN IMPLICATIONS ON 3D RENDERING SOFTWARES'

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the impact of materialized artefacts like passports and biometric residency cards on the regulation of individual movement and identity. Through autoethnography, the author, a Turkish citizen in London, investigates the prejudicial thinking surrounding different nationalities and the social borders shaping identity. Examining the construction of European identity, the study questions the artefacts' role in global regulation and their effects on social borders. Focusing on passports and biometric residence permits, the research highlights their mediating role in identification, nationality, and their design implications. The study employs critical design and rendering politics to shed light on the complexities of human movement regulation.



## INTRODUCTION

Today, the movement of individuals is regulated with various measurements based on citizenship and through materialized artefacts like passports and biometric residency cards (BRPs). The identifiers are created to track the movement on the borders and show not only the country of origin of an individual but also various countries' residency information and also categorize these individuals. These artefacts verify and indicate person's identity and label its existence in a global scale.

Design is connected with material and the possible interactions with the material (2013, P.89, Keshavarz). When an artefact is designed, beyond offering a service, it changes the environment as a result of the material used or the person who designed it and so on. In that sense, an object contains a perspective on the user (P.87). It is capable of affecting the way we think of who we are, who we should be and how to behave (P.88). This paper is a result of interrogating the immigrant body to understand why a passport or BRP is designed, what they consist of, their implications on people and, how critical design and rendering politics allows an understanding on the political regulation of movement of human beings.

I used auto ethnography method and put myself at the center of the research. As a Turkish citizen living in London, during my daily interactions with people, I noticed that people have a prejudicial thinking on people

with different nationalities. This social border was questioning my identity and depicting an expectation of who I should be. I don't identify myself as a European nor an Asian however; I share certain characteristics with both. These social borders are stemming from the unique historical events and experiences of every country. I am interested in the role of the designed artefacts for regulation of individuals in a global scale and their implications on the social borders. To explore further, I will clarify what is the meaning of being European, how it is constructed, what it excludes and how the categorization is related with the documented immigrant flesh.

Moreover, on 'Situated knowledge', Donna Haraway suggests multiple visions to create a feminist understanding rather than chasing for the objectivity. By using Kopytoff's methodology on interrogating the material, I questioned the artefacts that are designed to identify me and added state perspective on who I am or who I should be. I focused on my passport and biometric residence permit, which represent me as a citizen and an immigrant. These artefacts are being used while passing the border at the airport and indicate a geographical belonging to the nations of individuals. In this paper, I will be discussing the mediator artefacts that are used for identification and nationality, their further design implications, critical design and rendering politics as a way of expression.

**The structure of the thesis is as follows:**

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## 1. SOCIAL BORDERS TO GEOGRAPHICAL

In our daily lives, we categorize and identify others as we do it to ourselves. However, part of this external identification is systemized and legitimized by the authorities (2000, P.15, Brubaker and Cooper). The part of identity regulated by states represents an imposed identity consists of nationality, age, gender and so on. It is a consequence of the state capability on using the materials and identifiers as a tool to organize networks around individuals (2000, P.15). These materials include national ids, passports, driving licenses, which include our personal information like name, age, nationality and so on. The main identifier of these artefacts is based on the nationality (2012, P. 274, Chango). This situation is a result of the emergence of nation-states, which are mainly established after the First World War. These states had a legitimate authority to establish power on people to bring unity in a designated territory. Unification of people is achieved by the creation of common culture, tradition and beliefs, and using the education system as a tool to pass these to the other generations (Guibernu, 2013). As a result of the state bureaucracy, borders of nation-states are legitimized and the categorization become part of our regular life. (2000, P.16, Brubaker and Cooper) However, the identifiers and/or categorizations, which are built around nation-states, are causing social distinctions that are to exclude and include individuals such as allowing whom to enter or not to enter a country.

At the UK airport, categorization of people splits into two classes: European and non-European or International citizens. Certain countries, such as Turkey, go under the international category and pass through different stages of identity verification. In this part, I'll be focusing on how European identity is constructed before the nation states are established and EU-Turkey politics, to understand what borders imply socially and geographically and what networks designed around it.

Firstly, Roman Empire used the word "Europe" to identify the geographical boundaries rather than the cultural values (2014, P. 4, Bakemans). After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, this geographical identity is used to unify Christians against the common enemy Arabs (2014, P.5). With the fall of Constantinople, the conflict between Europe who adopted Christianity and part of Asia who adopted Islam became more visible (2014, P.4). In the history, European identity is emerged to preserve the sense of belonging in the region and bring unity to the region. Besides that, European identity is positioned and defined itself against Arabian identity in both geographical and cultural context (2014, P. 6).

Today, even the Muslim population is increasing in Europe, they are not considered as European (2002, P.209, Asad). As a specific example Turks identity had marks of different cultures including Ottomans, Byzantine and ancient Asian principalities, as different nations ruled on the region throughout the history. European Union set some obligations for

Turkey to be implemented in Turkey as a requirement for Turkey to have the opportunity to become a part of European Union. One of the most discussed compromises offered by EU in the media was the right to travel freely in European countries without a visa for Turkish citizens. In my opinion, in 2010 the political events in Turkey and opportunity to join EU had various meanings and implications, which were far beyond being able to travel freely to EU countries solely. Majority of Turkish population is Muslim whereas the majority of EU is Christian. So, acceptance of Turkey to join EU could be a critical point and imply that the boundaries of European identity is flexible.

Borders may seem to indicate a geographical territory but it might also indicate a social, cultural and political territories (2016, P.3, Brah). Social boundaries', of being European or Asian, is a result of the history. With the emergence of nation-states, networks designed around individuals are driven by nationality. As a result, the control mechanisms designed for immigrants put emphasis on the boundaries of collective identities and being the other (1999, P.449, Vertovec). This situation leads to social sorting and emergence of distinctive hierarchies amongst nations. Immigrants are considered as 'the possible threat' and the people who should be checked and controlled before being allowed to enter the country. In UK, the difference between being European and International is that Internationals should register to the police, receive a Biometric Residence Permit and prove their



existence with documentation. In this context, as being part of the verification process, passport indicates that some bodies are allowed and others are tagged as the invaders (114, Keshavarz). Keeping in mind the historical background of nations, next part of the research investigates what is designed for immigrants and the implications of RFID tags that reinforce the control and use of the immigrant body.



## 1.DIGITISATION OF THE BODY

The physical artefacts, that are being used to identify people by governments and border control, consist of passports, residence permits, credit cards and national identity cards (1994, P.298, Lyon). Borders are one of the places that identity is checked thoroughly and secured through RFIDs, fingerprint verification and face recognition. In exchange for security or being able to travel, individuals share their personal information and biometrics with the authorities. State identification, of the individual with physical artefacts, is being modernized with the introduction of verification on electronic databases (1994, P.297, Lyon). This part of the research explores digitization of the body through cases such as body-embedded RFIDs, in other words a microchip that contains a variety of data and through a unique identification code which has a connection to databases where data is stored. It is being vastly used on identification processes such as border passing and exhibits concerns on surveillance, control and data breaches.

RFID technology is being used to increase efficiency to manage manufactured goods. It allows the identification of the products and contains unique set of data that represents the product. There are two types of RFID: passive and active. Active one requires batteries, an additional power source and regular checks whereas passive RFID doesn't require

The reader of the RFID, powers and reveals the data stored inside the tag. Today, passive RFIDs are being used to track pets, elder people, employees at work and individuals' who are travelling (2011, P.40, Bostrom and Sandberg).

An electronic passport is designed to exchange information between the border agent and the individual, however; consequently it excludes information and further functions from the individual (2016, Keshavarz). The microchips inside passports are introduced to the public and used globally by credit card companies. This indicates that, there has already been a market-oriented interest that disregards the individuals' economical and societal condition before the purposes of use has come to the point to track people by states (2016, P.153). A credit card company has a significant amount of knowledge on who you are and a capability to share information with private companies and this shared data allows marketing divisions to segment and profile customers. In that sense, usage of these microchips by the credit card companies and the way it is embraced by each state today may lead to data breaches and social sorting.

The information embedded inside the micro-chipped passport consist of biometrics, exiting - entering dates to countries, latest credit card transactions, flight arrangements and so on (2016, P.143, Keshavarz). Passports given to individuals represent each person uniquely; meanwhile the data embedded inside are not shared with the individual. The data

is stored is not visible to the passport holder (P.145, Keshavarz). The known databases that regulate and stores the data are Shengen Visa Center, These databases sort people in a social manner depending on who is to be considered as a possible threat for the state. A specific example is EURO-DAC where, regulates the fingerprint database for illegal entries to EU. The data base created for the purpose of detecting whether an individual is asylum seeker or passed the border illegally (P.25). This regulations main concern is the outsiders or the possible threats.

On the documentary series of Dark Net, an episode shows a voluntary under skin RFID tag implementation on a group of people in Stockholm, Sweden. It is called near field communication (NFC), which is another type of RFID that sends data wirelessly from the chip to the reader. It is a rice size chip that goes under the skin between thumb and elbow and allows connection with payment systems, doors, and services at the gym. One of the subjects defines her experience as “This is like an another me,” and then she changes her statement as “This is the new me”. Being connected to a network gives an opportunity to get rid of the cards that authenticates or proves who you are, seems practical however, its further implications need to be investigated. In Sweden, NFC is a growing trend even though the raising concerns over privacy, hacking and surveillance (2016, Dark Net).



The use of NFC by privatized companies carries high risk of data sharing without any notification to the individual. The RFID is introduced to our daily lives by credit-card companies and the governments embraced it to be used for a different purpose and this had problematic implications on moving bodies.

Parts of the human body such as eye, finger, and face are being used in the verification process and the data provided exists in connected databases. These processes and designed systems treat human body as the source of information to verify the credibility of each person. This verification process shows how exclusion, inclusion and power relations depend on the presentation of the body parts (297, Lyon). The developments on embedded RFID tags, that treat individuals as the source of data, are blurring the line between our body and digital fingerprint. Becoming the artefact and being connected to multiple information systems lead individuals to become more visible and open to the authorities and privatized companies by data sharing and control over data.

A single designed artefact, like a passport, contains all further connections within the networks and has the capability of reflecting the possible political and economical outcomes between nations. The main reason is that the artefact designed or the person it is designed for is a consequence of political events or how nations are socially constructed (p.106, Keshawarz). However, the designated use of it is to allow people

to pass the border blocks further questioning of the artefact itself and its implications (p.106, Keshawarz). Next part of the research questions how 3D software and critical design can be used to investigate an artefact such as a passport and reveal its further connections with the history and today's networks.



### 3.RENDERING BORDERS AND MOVEMENT

Nowadays, commercialized usages of rendered images, which is computer generated images by modeling and adding variables as light, shadow, texture and so on, are increasing and it is difficult to separate them from reality. Ikea, a manufacturing company, uses rendered images in its catalog, is an example of the reality generated on a computer (2016, Revell). Besides the commercial use of Rendering Software, artists are using as a critical tool to talk about borders, political relations of countries and so on. The usage of rendering software is increasing with the spread in online communities which share knowledge and use free open source softwares such as Blender. This softwares' source code is open to public and is editable by anyone who is interested. This accessibility forms a basis for expressions on alternative realities, existence and ways of expression (2016, Revell). The previous section of the paper was related with how digitization blurs the boundaries of human body and treats human body as source of data. This part is focused on how rendering can be used to experiment with the borders that surround us and give further information on the objects like a passport.

Iranian artist Morehsin Allahyari, on Rendering Borders exhibition collaborated with Israeli artist Lior Zalmanson. Because of the political dispute, Allahyari was not able to enter to Israel (Allahyari, 2018). So, before the exhibition

Allahyari's body got scanned, modelled on a 3D design program and during the exhibition her 3D body was printed in the art gallery in Jerusalem. Her body was manifested through the border in an alternative and poetic way(2018). Her way of using the rendering diminishes the value of geographical borders and puts emphasis on alternative way of existence within the political realms of nations. This work is an inspiring way to consider and question the meaning of the border.

In her other project “Material Speculation: ISIS”, she uses 3d modeling as a way to reconstruct the destroyed artefacts in 2015 by ISIS. By 3D printing those artefacts, she gives life to them in the physical world. There are usb sticks inside these models that contain images and maps about the environment where the artefacts had been destroyed(2018). In this work, by giving life to the destroyed artefacts and





embedding data inside them, she creates a further connection with the artefacts identity. Those destroyed artefacts were existed in a specific location; after they were modeled by using rendering software, they started to carry a history.

The first approach, Rendering Borders allows an understanding on how borders, current political situation of countries affect our way of existence. Material Speculation ISIS treats the process of 3d modeling, rendering and the printed artefact as giving life to a destroyed object. Considering these approaches through the research process, I played with the rendering software to deconstruct pieces of a passport. Each piece contains a different story, meaning, and a purpose and as a whole it is designed to communicate with the border agent. These pieces and their further connections with the history and databases are hidden from the passport holder (2016, Keshavarz). However rendering software, can be used to communicate and visualize the connected networks built around the passport.

#### 4..RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, I found autoethnography, which is an approach for a researcher to deliberately put herself/himself into the center of the research (2008, p.1, Mcilveen), a powerful method to investigate what is designed for the immigrant body. Centre of the research takes grant from my standpoint as a Turkish immigrant living in UK where it is based on self-understanding, experience and interpretation. This approach is a result of an attempt to make critical sense of my experiences with others in the system. This research allowed me to come up with further connections around body, data storage systems, history of nations and design. My main concern on auto ethnography method is the criticism around how subjective it is and how it is related with the individuals' own experience. It has come to my attention that my standpoint and experiences might have a subjective perspective however, interrogating the object added depth to my research as Harraway (1988) suggested. I questioned the artefacts those are designed to identify me. This way of interrogation allowed me to understand the state's vision of my existence as a citizen and as an immigrant.

Material culture takes its roots from the idea that artefacts prove human cognition at the time of its existence (1982, p.1, Prown). So, the artefacts created or modified by humans can show the individuals

an understanding towards the society (1982, p.2, Prown). Moreover, in archaeological studies there is a great value in interpretation of historical objects to learn about the body which refers to person's identity, sex, gender, age and so on (2006, P.199, Cochran and Beaudry). I used Kopytoff's Methodology "The Cultural Biography of Thing", where he values man made material as result of human cognition and the material, which represents an understanding of the person who is made for. So, I questioned my Passport and its extension my Biometric Residence Permit, which are designed to identify me as a citizen and an immigrant. Kopytoff suggests asking the following questions to objects;

"Who makes it, in what conditions, from which materials, for what purpose, what are the recognized stages in development, how does it move from hand to hand and what other contexts and uses can it has?" (2005, P.75, Hoskins)

His other point is asking questions, which are intended for humans, to objects (2005, P.75). At the beginning of this research, I asked myself "Who am I? Am I European or Asian? Why do I have to be something?" By following Kopytoff's methodology, I asked above questions to the objects designed to identify me. The reason why I asked these questions is to explore and reveal the purpose behind what it is designed, why it is designed in a specific way to identify individuals and what are the further implications of the design (2005, P.80, Hoskins).

The difference of a thing that Kopytoff discusses and a passport includes is that it contains a microchip. The microchip is a physical object; however, it is based on the database software that allows storing the information. Kopytoff, identifies things with their material quality however, software is not tangible. But it is something man-made, attached to a physical object and built for the purpose to manage information in various contexts. In that sense, I considered the way software allows data management as an artefact, which indicates that humans need to be regulated and controlled by all means. So, the meaning of the artefact is based on the creator of the artefact rather than its physical quality. Through the research the way I engaged with Rendering Software was based on creating a computer generated version of a passport and deconstructing it. In that sense, software allowed me to create a replica of a computer-generated passport. It is made by a human with the purpose of deconstructing the passport but the visuals are rendered by the computer. Even the software is not tangible; it is not entirely different than creating an object that contains the physical quality.

By following this method, I questioned a passport and biometric residency permit, which are developed specifically to identify who I am. The reasoning behind this methodology is to explore and reveal the reasons' behind the design of a passport.

## 5. CASES AND FINDINGS

### PINAR

Who makes it?

I am the second child of Nilgün Apaydın who is a pharmacist and Ali Apaydın who is a doctor. Also, as a sister of Resit who was at 7 years old when my mother had given birth to me.

In what conditions?

I was born in Antalya, Turkey on 01.02.1995. My National ID Card was issued a couple of weeks after my birth and without my consent my religion was depicted as Muslim.

What are the recognized stages in development?

When I started to understand the political condition of Turkey, I was around sixteen years old and Erdogan was in power for nine years. I was born into a family who consists of secular thinkers and was highly overwhelmed by the radical policies of a long lasting government in power.

How does it move from hand to hand and what other contexts and uses can it has?

As a citizen, I am supposed not to express my political opinions in Turkey because of the current tension. As an immigrant, I am supposed to behave well, do the right things, contribute to the economy and eventually go back

home. For instance, compared to who I am in Istanbul to who I am in London I noticed that I have an additional behavioral filter. I was walking with my friend next to river at night in Southbank and my friend suggested me to go down to the beach by jumping over the locked gate. At that moment I got cold feet and started thinking about what if a police officer comes and



## LAYERS OF AN ELECTRONIC PASSPORT

Throughout the history, passports were in various forms, which are fingerprints, seals, and papers that are issued by an institution, king, queen or a government (Keshavarz, p.115). After the World War I, with the emergence of nation-states, a need for regulation of movements is on the rise (127). One of the roles of passports is legitimizing the nation state as a collectivity because modern states built on lands also included individuals with controversial nationalities (2018, p.1, Torpey). Apart of being a symbol of a national collectivity, it is used to regulate and track border crossing of the people on an international scale. As a result, individuals' freedom of movement is restricted and individuals become reliant on the state regulation.

Passports that are in use within the regulations are recommended by the International Civil Aviation Canada; however, the complexity and aesthetics change according to the states' preferences (2018, p.4). A passport is unique to each nationality and carefully layered to prevent imitation and identity theft. According to the agency (2018, Lindsay) that designs the UK passports, it is designed for the border agent, not for the individual. Border agents check hundreds of passports as a layer of security so a passport needs to be designed carefully. The complexity of the security layers of the passport depends on governments' preference. Water marking, plastics, the way papers and the cover of the passport are stitched and the complexity level of these each element chosen for the purpose of preventing imitation (2018).

## COVER

It is a green colored Turkish special passport. Moon and star is the national symbols of Turkey. It is a symbol that can be seen on the Ottoman Empire badge. The color green indicates that it is a special type of passport, which is given to certain state officials like professors, soldiers, doctors and their family members. Children are allowed to carry green passport till they get twenty-five years old. It is a different passport type than a diplomatic passport because a diplomatic passport is being given to high-level state officials and it is black. Green passport allows entry to EU countries (Before Brexit except UK) up to ninety days. However, border control guards are not familiar with this passport type so they ask additional questions such as why you have this passport, what do you do for living, what is your parents job or they call supervisors for additional checks.





## BIOMETRIC SYMBOL

In 2011 to fulfill the EU requirements and to have the chance to join EU, Turkey switched to micro chipped passports. As a passport renewal process, Turkish police office obtained fingerprints and two biometric photos. These issued passports contain RFID tags that are readable at the border by the agents; however, it is possible that other machines can read these too. Old passports were used to contain detailed, body measurements of an individual; however, with the introduction of these microchips, it contains small bits of varied data such as movement of the individual, the border which has been passed and when has been passed (2016, P.145, Keshavarz). The data stored and the databases are connected to the microchip is not visible to the holder (2016, P.155). EU works with “Frontex” which is a security company for border control and secure Europe borders from outside threats(2016, P.152). EURODAC is another finger-print database that created for checking immigrant entries. Frontex, Eurodac databases contains data on an international scale(2016, P.25)



## GOZEN SECURITY STICKERS

According to Gozen company website, Gozen Security Services is a private Turkish security consultation company that has international and national customers. Moreover this company in partnership with International Air Transport Association (IATA) which is in charge of representing 290 airlines. Gozen offer airport security checks; provide K9 dogs and personnel for security. In Turkey they are working in twelve airports. Each airway company, depends on the country of origin, has various security requirements. So, Gözen security provides unique solutions for each airway. After the attack to the Ataturk airport in Istanbul in 2011, airports in Turkey has increased security measures. There used to be two security checks at the entrance of the airport and after the border control. Now, in addition to that at the check-in desk, Gozen security puts a sticker on the passport and during the boarding, they do thorough checks like bomb tests on the belongings before letting passengers into the plane.



## UK VISA

Visa represents the authorization given to the individual to pass the border (136, Keshavarz). According to UK visa applications website, the application requires a bank statement showing a specific amount of money to prove that an individual can cover his/her expenses during his/her travel duration in UK, or parents bank statements if the money is coming from them, criminal record statement of the individual from justice department, diplomas and certificates gained by the individual throughout his/her life, employment and education history and a Skype interview at the embassy. After handing in the documents, depend on the money paid at the beginning of the application process the passport can be returned in three weeks up to four months depending on the type of the visa that is applied for.



## UK VISA- SYMBOLS

The symbols on the UK visa consist of a Unicorn that represents Scotland, a Horse that represents England in between the crown gives these countries power to rule. According to myths these two animals were enemy. The myth behind the chained unicorn is that a free unicorn is powerful and can be dangerous (Cavell, 2017). The crown gives two enemies power to rule. “Dieu et Mon Droit” means “God my right” which is the motto of the Royal Family (2017).



Royal Coat- Jordan Cavell-15th May 2017

## BRP AS AN EXTENSION OF VISA

In 2010, UK government cancelled national identity cards for UK citizens; however, designed biometric identity cards for foreign nationals (P.I, Warren& Mavroudi). It is stated that BRP is a product of immigration management; however, as an inevitable consequence it is used for surveillance and to categorize non-Europeans. This card states that individuals outside EEA are risky and needs to be regulated. Symbols on the BRP contain the EU badge, which consists of bull and stars. Stars represents the unity. There is a myth behind the bull symbol, where its origin comes from ancient greek. Bull represents Zeus the Greek God and Europa is the daughter of Phoenician King Tyre. Zeus turns into a bull and kidnaps Europa(2014, Bakemans). According to the myth Europe named after from the kidnapped Asian princess and the bull became the symbol of EU.



## 6. CONCLUSION

Explorations of what is designed for identification of individuals require an interrogation on the reasons and further research and developments on it. As human has, an object also has a biography that can be revealed by questioning it. The biography of an object reflects the human perspective on a man-made object like a passport that allows an understanding of the society or the individual.

Questioning of who I am by understanding of my identity gave me a subjective point of view. In addition, my in depth analysis and research gave me a objective perspective and thought me the reason I am not a European is highly related with the state politics. Even it is an identity embraced by the individuals, it is also dictated by the authorities. To my understanding, the positioning of European identity lacks an understanding on non-Europeans, in my case Turkish people.

Secondly, as I pointed out on the second chapter, the essential component of a passport is the microchip, which led to a more legitimate representation of our body and is also connected to multiple databases. The interesting part of this microchip technology is that it's introduced by credit-card companies to our lives and used with the purpose of profit making. Considering that nation-states has a claim towards the individuals' existence and has a capability to design a way of existence that a microchip's

adaptation to border passing process carries the risk of data sharing and invasion of privacy. With the embedded RFIDs being connected to multiple databases and giving authorization to access to data generated allows a visibility, which may encourage the states' claim on moving bodies and may allow use of data by the privatized companies.

People are not fully aware that the use of technologies such as RFIDs embedded into an human body open to dilemmas in terms of ethics and security and brings many issues such as the breach of individual's privacy depending on the purpose of use and the control mechanism on the data.

Moreover, I find the artefact representation of the individual, is becoming the artefact itself with embedded RFID, is related with art works that are used in 3D softwares as a way to create alternative way of existence. In a sense, 3D softwares allow a realistic way of existence of the body or the object in the digital space. As I mentioned in the IKEA case, the results are difficult to separate reality from what is created digitally in the 3D software (2016, Revell). How Morehsin Allahyari used 3D modelling, rendering and printing was to give life herself beyond the body and used it to pass a geographical border. Each way she used, contains a meaning and is well designed to point out the strict borders that are occurred because of the state politics. Considering the historical relation that design has with the material and its capability of changing the environment, her works represent a counter reaction to what is designed for people and

a re-interpretation of material.

I learnt that design is related with the up to date political situation between nations and their objectives and embodies the history of nations and has a capability to dictate a way of existence. The further exploration of this research may lead to questioning of the privatization of border control which carries the risks of data breaches on a global scale and is problematic considering developing and underdeveloped countries has a lack of law on data sharing issues.



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