The Eyes of the State:

The See-Shoot System, Border Surveillance, and Nintendo Warfare

By Chava Brownfield-Stein

"We are the eyes of the State", said Noam Lazarovich (2011) in a press interview referring to her military role as an electronic observer operating the See-Shoot system. The See-Shoot system was developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems as Sentry Tech : Long Distance Stationary Remote-Controlled Weapon Station (Rcws).[1] The weapons system was given its nickname Roa-Yora (See-Shoot) by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) that com-missioned it. The nickname became common in both military and civilian discourse in Israel.[2] The stationary and unmanned system is part of the advanced technological systems deployed by the IDF along Israel's borders over the past few years.[3] The system's pillbox towers are located several miles apart around the security fence separating the Gaza Strip and Israel. It combines tracking and shooting capabilities that are directed at the same target – people approaching the fence – and operated from a remote-control position by female soldiers serving as Army observers in the IDF's electronic observation unit made up solely of women which is part of the Combat Intelligence Collection Corps.[4]

"The eyes of the State" is an expression first used at the end of the 1973 war by an infantry combat soldier, Benny Massas, interviewed in a TV report after the battle and occupation of Mount Hermon on the border between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, Syria and Lebanon.[5] Massas, a member of the Golani Brigade, explained that the Hermon outpost was vital because it was "the eyes of the State". It became one of the national verbal icons for the area's highest point, which enables strategic observation far into neighbouring States and monitoring of the State's border.

One of the military's traditional roles is to secure the Nation-State's borders and protect its sovereignty against foreign threats. Although both Benny and Noam used the same expression, there are several important contextual differences : their gender (male, female); their military roles (combat, combat support) and their object of reference (mountain, woman soldier's eyes). The use of the same expression to refer to the strategic mountain on the northern border and to the eyes watching a computer screen on the southern border highlights the shifts that have taken place in a complex variety of surveillance and border-related phenomena from north to south : variable military technologies, alternative border control strategies, external and internal borders, and challenges from foreign military

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[1] Rafael Advanced Defense Systems : http://www.rafael.co.il/4312-en/Marketing.aspx.

[2] Conversation with Rafael's deputy spokesperson, Tel Aviv, February 2017. Roa Yora (Hebrew) – means seeing shooting in the feminine. See here for further details.

[3] Ziv, 2014 ; Blumer, 2016.

[4] The corps was established in 2009 for collecting and processing field intelligence using advanced technologies. See IDF website for images and Hebrew text.

[5] See here for the 3':21" original broadcast (no subtitles).

forces, militias and guerillas, terror infiltrations, civil disobedience and illegal/ illicit or undocumented/ unauthorized migration.[6] The new surveillance devices, technological advances and developments in military strategy that have recently appeared on the scene have given rise to innovative collaborations and hybrid situations that straddle the different environments of computer games, military simulators and real combat conditions, blurring the gap between real and virtual combat in the specific context of border control (Der Derian, 2009, p.10) as in other contexts.

The purpose of this article is to offer insights concerning the interface or intersection between new border control technologies and military roles. It focuses on Rafael's See-Shoot System deployed along the southern border with Gaza to examine how technological devices and tactical changes reconstruct the concept of "border control", in turn affecting surveillance techniques, military strategy and military users. The article traces the shift from traditional defensive and offensive combat strategies that involve mutual risk of injury and death for individual combatants like Massas, symmetrical fighting, and territorial conquest, to an anticipatory strategy of "prevention through deterrence", that combines technologically advanced environments, but also traditional forces (Inda, 2006, p.118). It illuminates the change to a preventive policing approach, screen-mediated remote border control and "warfare without risk"/"riskless warfare" (Kahn, 2002, p.4) activated by combat support women soldiers such as Lazarovich, in addition to traditional tactics and face-to-face war practices.[7]

The article is organized as follows. Following a discussion of the concepts of border, border area and border surveillance, focusing on hi-tech weaponry along Israel's borders, the second section presents military technological advances in border control as embodied by the Israeli See-Shoot system. The third section examines the change of border control and related combat strategies resulting from the technological transfiguration involved in what is known as "Nintendo warfare" (Brophy, 2013, pp.66-67). This section deals with the relations between gaming and military industries, and between military simulations and war games or military gaming.[8] Focusing on the See-Shoot System, the article concludes by pointing to the relations between the visual factor, violence and pleasure embedded in border control weapons systems and contemporary warfare and their ethical affects.

Border, Border Areas and Border Surveillance

Over the past two decades, the concepts of border, border areas and border control have been extensively studied and discussed in various fields, while undergoing significant

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[6] There are two sets of terms: illegal/ illicit and undocumented/unauthorized. "Illegal/illicit" are used in public and government discourses and are focused on the legal aspect and arena of the phenomenon. The "Undocumented/ unauthorized" are used in academic discourse and are focused on the social and political aspect.

[7] Yet it is important to emphasize that on the borders of Israel from north to south, as well as alongside the border between Gaza Strip and Israel, there are additional combinations of different forces and combat units using traditional combat methods.

[8] The term "military gaming" refers to games that were either designed by the military, developed for military purposes or with technical military's support. The term "war game" refers to games that have a military theme without having a direct connection to real-world military institutions.

developments in terms of State practices. The term border is used to define spatial relations, regulate arrangements between States or organize the social order, and to describe relationships between the individual, social and national bodies. It represents a local and relative configuration of power relations at a given moment. Therefore, it is temporary, negotiable, and a potential object of struggle. In its role as a gatekeeper, it blocks and differentiates desirables from undesirables, legal from illegal, inclusion from exclusion. It regulates, divides and enables territorial as well as social supervision (Anderson, 1991 ; Paasi, 2009). Balibar (2010, p.316) suggests that borders are characterized by "*intrinsic ambivalence that derives from their internal and external functions, as the basis of collective belonging and state control over territory*".

According to the traditional model, borders have a major role in the development of Nation-States. They are used to demarcate the territory according to international agreements based on mutual understandings between sovereign nations and are defined as institutional sites of governance. Nation-States use borders to create a spatial order of distinct human activity, and to mark those belonging to the nation and those remaining outside the national territory within which their sovereignty is enforced (Walsh, 2013). In accordance with the traditional geographic model, the geographic and topographic structure of borders, their length, hardness of terrain and contiguity are decisive components in the readiness of neighbouring countries to go to war and are pivotal to the nature of conflicts between neighbours (Hoseason, 2010, pp.170-171). The 1973 Battle of Mount Hermon is an exact example of this traditional approach.

The contemporary border discourse maps the borders of post-industrial democracies as complex, multidimensional and dynamic areas marked by processes of change. Indeed, research refers less to the fixed territorial entities than to a set of border processes and phenomena, and to the control and management of borders as a specific technology of power (Johnson *et al*., 2011).[9] In post-industrial democracies, contemporary technologies allow for new and dynamic transnational relations, privatization and digitization. State power is exerted through delegation of its sovereignty, and new agents have joined the State as a traditional actor, including local, private and international ones. Perkins and Rumford (2013, p.270) call this modification the *vernacularization* of borders. Thus, whereas in previous geopolitical eras border phenomena focused on the relations between neighbouring countries, today's major issues in border management among post-industrial democracies have to do with the mobility of refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers, whether legal or not, and with terror infiltrations more than with State military forces.

In the post-9/11 era, issues of border control have become increasingly fused with the so-called "war on terror", leading to accelerated technologization of the border. Border control mechanisms have changed from direct to indirect : they are now mediated by

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[9] According to Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (2005, pp.642-645), the literature offers four analytical lenses to examine border phenomena. The first is economic and refers to market forces, migration and trade flows, both legal and illegal. The second, government, lens refers to policy activities of governments and national sovereignty on borders. The third focuses on the political and military power forces of borderland communities, and the fourth on the specific cultures of these communities.

sophisticated instruments and electronic data. The attempt to secure borders, protect territorial spaces and enforce access restrictions has led many western post-industrial countries to develop digital schemes, creating what is called "smart borders" (Dijstelbloem & Broeders, 2015, p.22). Current geopolitical conditions have led to the deployment of advanced geo-spatial technologies, including the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System (Isis), hi-tech fences, remote sensors, Remote Video Surveillance Systems (Rvss) satellite imagery, night vision goggles, GPS devices, drones or advanced radar systems. Throughout Europe, North America or Australia and the Far East, geographic information systems (GIS) constantly monitor data from remote topographic sensors, and relaying intelligence in real time. The geo-surveillance approach has turned territorial borders into dynamic systems of spatial data and technological control, requiring us to reconceptualize border control (Inda, 2006; Veal, 2003).

In some respects, the modification described above is also applicable to the evolution and processes of border control in some of Israel's borders that has taken place since 1973. In recent years, the border defence system from Sinai to the Golan Heights has grown in manpower and technological means as part of the border protection programme, notably to reduce the danger to life and limb. The move is towards modular forms, and a combination of diverse forces in border areas. The barriers along the borders of Israel with Syria, Jordan, Lebanon or the separation zone along the West Bank are manned by combat troops deployed along those dividing lines, but also on patrol roads and at crossing points, operating advanced technological devices such as "smart" fences, sensors and cameras, as well as surveillance assets such as the See-Shoot System (Ben Ari *et al.*, 2010, pp.126-127).

There has been a move away from direct attacks to conquer territory such as Mount Hermon that both defines a border and enables monitoring of hostile territories, to a more preventive military presence along the border with the Gaza Strip, that relies on a combination of traditional combat battalions with screen-mediated monitoring and remote weapon systems such as the See-Shoot System, the "Cold Fire" system or the Thor system;[10] a weapon station with dual machine gun and laser capabilities, or the "Border Gatekeeper", an unmanned vehicle for remote fire missions (Ofer, 2017).

The Thor system is a Directed Energy Weapon for Standoff Neutralization of IEDs and UXOs, which is mounted on a vehicle. Compared to traditional weapons, laser weapons offer significant benefits, including minimal collateral damage, long-range force application capabilities, and lethal target effects, without exposing the crews to unnecessary danger. There are additional advantages such as reduced operational costs and lower manpower requirements due to automated battle management systems using state-of-the-art electronics.[11] The "Border Gatekeeper" unmanned vehicles, developed by the IDF together with Elbit Systems, as part of high-tech border control systems, play a major role in routine

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[10] *Cf*. http://www.rafael.co.il/5689-762-en/Marketing.aspx.
[11] The use of the laser is done sparingly due to the legal restrictions anchored in international conventions.

defence operations such as patrol missions and securing border roads.[12] As the new vehicles (equipped with an advanced weapons system) move along the Gaza Strip fence, they are remotely operated from the war room by a team of two female electronic observers. One drives the vehicle by using a steering wheel and pedals that are very similar to those found in armoured vehicles or to the simulators of driving game consoles. The other, while viewing the camera data, processes the information on the display, which is collected using the systems installed on the vehicle.[13]

The border between the Gaza Strip which is a self-governing Palestinian territory and Israel is different than the northern Borders of Israel that are borders between sovereignty states. Israel was developing a border control strategy which aims at an "integrated response" to the challenges emerging from the Gaza Strip, and See-Shoot System was developed to perform a multiplicity of border control missions. Note that the IDF's electronic observation unit, as part of the Field Intelligence Battalion, is under the command of the Sagi Regional Brigade in the Southern Command and is not the only one deployed along the border with Gaza.[14] All the units, including the mixed-gender combat outfits such as the Caracal Battalion, are performing ongoing security tasks and employ traditional combat tactics to prevent terror infiltrations, smuggling and illegal migration.

The See-Shoot System: Border surveillance

In 2008, deployment of the See-Shoot System along the Gaza Strip border fence was completed and it became operational.[15] The system is based on a line-up of remote-controlled weapon stations (Rcws) integrated with optical sensors and high-resolution cameras, security and intelligence sensors. It is mounted on a pillbox tower topped by a metal dome and linked by fibre optics to a remote C4I centre.[16] The system is controlled from a low platform at the intelligence-gathering war room, its walls covered in screens. To the right of the weaponry is a camera, which transmits a clear image of the target onto a screen opposite the observer. With a press on a button the dome opens to reveal a heavy machine gun. Small squeezes of the joystick aim the barrel. Another press on the button and the figure is hit by a bullet.

As marketed by the Rafael website the system is designed for a wide range of missions from law enforcement monitoring, through surveillance, monitoring and border

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[12] IDF Robotics Unit Commander Major Resnik comments : "The vision is that these systems, mounted on unmanned platforms, will replace soldiers and fighters carrying out routine security operations along the border fence and who are vulnerable to firing from ambushes or roadside charges". *Cf*. IDF First-Time Trial : Remote Fire from UGV : https://i-hls.com/archives/83267, 2.1.2018.

[13] *Cf*. https://www.makorrishon.co.il/nrg/online/1/ART2/879/849.html ; www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3697502,00.html ; https://www.mitgaisim.idf.il/תפקידים/מפעילת-כרבם-כלי-רכב-בלתי-מאויש/.

[14] The IDF Southern Command is responsible for the protection the southern borders (Arava, Negev, and Eilat regions), including about 65 kilometers along the Gaza border : https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/southern-command/.

[15] See Hebrew news report.

[16] A single C4I centre can control several weapons stations. The information acquired by the sensor is transferred to the electro-optic component of the weapon station which slews to the target, enabling the operator to locate and track the target : http://www.rafael.co.il/5620-691-en/Marketing.aspx.

control, and up to remote control with missiles and machine guns.[17] Together with other advanced technological solutions, the system is promoted worldwide as protecting borders against illegal migration, drug smuggling and terror infiltrations. According to the Rafael website, the system enables operation of multiple weapon stations from a single remote operator station, shortens response time, reduces the number of frontline soldiers, enhances survivability, and increases surveillance and intelligence gathering by using optical sensors.[18]

Together with long-range missiles, "smart bombs" and remote-control weapons systems that combine visual technologies with high-tech weaponry, the deployment of the See-Shoot System along the border with Gaza marks the move from a classic face-to-face combat – as in the 1973 war – to a military combination approach of combat and selective targeting. It must be noted that selective targeting and killing of a live target in hostile territory or near the border by means of advanced technologies and hi-tech weaponry was first activated by the IDF's use of a drone and Apache helicopter during Mussawi's targeted assassination (Bergman, 2018, pp.248-257). However, in the case of the Gaza Strip fence and the See-Shoot System, it is a strategy and a system that extends along the entire border and is consistently and systematically implemented as a monitoring and control strategy, and not only in exceptional cases and against specific individuals. As such, it is perceived and promoted as a preventive-defensive strategy designed to thwart threats in the border area. It is reminiscent of hunting or a "*hide-and-seek game*" (Chamayou, 2015, p.12).[19]

Remote electro-optical weaponry enables those controlling the border to increase the physical distance between soldiers and their opponents. The advantage of these systems is their ability to display military strength without exposing the vulnerability of soldiers. In our case, this advantage is reinforced by the gender aspect of the Israeli system's operators. The See-Shoot System is the only IDF weapon operated exclusively by women soldiers, whose roles are defined as those of Army observer and electronic observation controller. The role of the observer is – at all times – to monitor the system fences along the borders by means of technological devices, the operation of systems for detecting, identifying and preventing hostile forces from afar, and guiding the combat forces.[20] As described by an electronic observer : "*The cameras sit in vital places in the area and are directed toward the fence, […] we're at our posts twenty-four hours a day and try to detect any penetration. There's a systematic scanning in which we go over the routes, the fence, and, according to alerts, try*

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[17] Sentry Tech : Long Distance Stationary Remote-Controlled Weapon Station", in Rafael Advanced Defense Systems. *Cf.* http://www.rafael.co.il/marketing/SIP_STORAGE/FILES/4/1104.pdf ; http://www.rafael.co.il/5672-1037-en/Marketing.aspx; http://www.rafael.co.il/Marketing/396-1687-en/Marketing.aspx.

[18] Its TopLite optical sensor system enables remote detection, identification, and monitoring of mobile targets, including at night and under bad weather conditions! http://www.rafael.co.il/5672-1037-en/Marketing.aspx.

[19] As described in Bergman's book, these feelings were aroused also in the case of Mussawi's assassination : "*we've got him*", one of the analysts watching the video feed said. Two hundred miles away, intelligence operatives had a clear view of a target. "*Suddenly*", an internal review of that morning later reported, "*the scent of a hunt was in the air*" (Bergman 2018, p.250).

[20] https://www.mitgaisim.idf.il/%D7%AA%D7%A4%D7%A7%D7%99%D7%93%D7%99%D7%9D/%D7%AA%D7%A6%D7%A4%D7%99%D7%AA%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%AA (Hebrew).

to catch any penetration" (Ben Ari *et al.*, 2010, p.127). However, the See-Shoot System operator role is not limited to surveillance : it can include spotting and shooting suspicious persons. Nonetheless, IDF defines the electronic observation controller' role as "combat support" only.

In 2013, the military redefined the criteria distinguishing different types of military tasks, and among other things determined that remote operators of offensive weapons cannot be considered full-fledged combatants. This differentiates between combatants such as Benny Massas and electronic observation controllers such as Noam Lazarovich, adding another layer of distinction between the 1973 battle and 21st century border control. The two basic criteria for differentiation are traditional : mortal danger and spatial proximity. A combatant is defined as one who "*risks his life, having been trained to fight and hit the enemy in the space of close-contact operations*" (Shoval, 2013). Combat support soldiers, on the other hand, are defined as "*not operating in the space of close-contact operations, having been trained to operate weapon systems designed to hit the enemy*" (Shoval, 2013). In the case of the See-Shoot System, the difference is also completely gendered.

In general, men do not serve as electronic observation controllers, and only women electronic observers operate the See-Shoot System (Ahronheim, 2017).[21] This is also one of the reasons for its feminine name. While the See-Shoot System's commercial name highlights its high-tech operational qualities, its IDF name highlights its two basic functions. Moreover, as Hebrew verb conjugations have a masculine and feminine form, the use of the latter to refer to the system indicates the operators' gender. Thus, although Wilcox (2015) argues that the availability of remotely controlled weapons systems cancels out the gendering of their users, it appears that for the IDF, this distinction is still significant. Moreover, the various stages of operating the system and the duration of the delay between seeing and shooting also follow (in most cases) a gender hierarchy : between an electronic observation controller (a combat support woman soldier) and a male combat commander.

The identification of the target and the recommendation to "incriminate" it, in IDF parlance, are the responsibility of the electronic observation controller, who is considered the professional authority in that regard. The decisions to incriminate the target and approve use of fire are made by a battalion commander, in most cases a male combat officer. Opening fire requires weapon instigation by a combat officer (mostly male), and the joystick is pressed by a (female) electronic observation controller (a double safety-catch mechanism). Approval is typically granted within two minutes. The system is manned by women soldiers with one-year experience as electronic observation controllers, and high acquaintance with the landscape and target population. The constant monitoring technology of the See-Shoot system and constant observation of its operators are implementation of the Panopticon principle and the logic that underlies the "surveillance society" (Foucault, 2003). Nevertheless, it is not "all-seeing", as the cross-border underground tunnels between the

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[21] "*It's hard for male soldiers to multi-task*" said two women soldiers serving in the IDF's electronic observation unit to *Jerusalem Post* reporter Anna Ahronheim (2017).

Gaza Strip and Israel avoid the optical sensors, and they are only one reaction to Israel's surveillance. Black smoke screen from burning tires are another tactic that Palestinian protesters along the fence between the Gaza strip and Israel have used against the constant observation by the "all-seeing" See-Shoot System (BBC News, 2018).

The system is user-friendly and electronic observation controllers need only one-week training after one year of serving. During their training, the electronic observation controllers undergo military simulations designed to train them for real-life combat situations, and importantly, also to depersonalize the act of killing (Grossman, 1996, pp.177-178). Military simulations are based on a combination between visualization technologies and (representational) digital weapons system, and the analogy between military simulations and commercial war-games recurs frequently in interviews and discussions about the See-Shoot System.

Between Virtuality and Reality: Military Simulations, Military Gaming and the See-Shoot System

Military simulations, military gaming and war-games share a long history, despite their different purposes. Civil-military cooperation and official/ public collaborations between the gaming industry and the US Department of Defense began in the second half of the 20th century. But America's Army (AA) was the first military game developed, launched (2002) and marketed proactively by the US government and the US military. It is classified as a military game and it is still marketed as the "official game of the US Army".[22] Moreover, it was the first game designed by the military for the purpose of influencing civilian gamers. The multi-player shooting game freely available on the internet combines 3-D images and documentary footage to achieve maximal realism and authenticity. The game was intended to serve as a recruiting tool for expanding the ranks of the army, a pedagogical tool for military training, and a propaganda tool for changing public opinion (Schulzke, 2013).

In the past decades military organizations have increasingly been using digital games to practice the art of contemporary warfare, notably as regards shooting skills, air battles, training and simulating of a wide range of combat scenarios, acquisition of values and military leadership, developing models of decision-making, patterns of human behaviour, socialization and coping with psychological consequences of military service (PTSD). While military organizations count on visual technologies developed by the civilian game industry, game developers rely on military experts for advisement on battlefield behaviour and battleground environments (Lenoir, 2000). Over the past twenty years, the two systems have converged and now operate integrally. The visual qualities of military and entertainment games are similar, the degree of detail and fidelity, or accuracy and realism and levels of authentication are similar, and there is an identical convergence of simulated and real events

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[22] See underline official game website and on YouTube.

– resulting in a similarly immersive gaming experience (Sparrow *et al*., 2015, pp.8-9 ; Parsithsangaree *et al*., 2014, pp.648-650).

The literature refers to war-games, military games and military simulations as components in a multimodal array of interrelations ; a multimodal military-culture-propaganda nexus (Pötzsch & Hammond, 2016). These have been variously referred to as the "military-entertainment complex" (Lenoir, 2000, p.327); "militainment" (Stahl, 2010, pp.21-35) ; and "military-industrial-media-entertainment network" (Pötzsch & Hammond, 2016). Catherine Zimmer (2011, pp.433-435) used the term "surveillance-entertainment complex" to argue that in our contemporary "viewer society", surveillance and entertainment technologies are intermeshed, and there is a mutual leakage between TV strategies, film narratives, and strategies of surveillance, monitoring and control. Guanio-Uluru Lykke (2016) discusses the interplay between ethics, game technologies and screen-mediated military technologies. She problematizes the binary polarization distinctions between "played war" and "actual war" and elaborates on the effects of advanced military technologies on the human body. Guanio-Uluru distinguishes between the body (in military contexts) as a site of discipline and the body (in gaming contexts) as a site of pleasure, pointing to contemporary soldiery body as a site of discipline and a site of enjoyment.

The main subjects related to the intermeshing of the two worlds focus on issues centring on computerized warfare, the recruitment of soldiers, normalization of war and training methods, assimilation of hegemonic ideology and nationalism as well as the intensification and rationalization of State violence, the veneration of aggression, the construction of militaristic fantasies and assimilation of war perceptions as a sanitized war (Sparrow *et al*., 2015, pp.8-9; Leonard, 2004, pp.1-8). Although manufacturers of simulation and military games as well as their military and civilian users tend to hold the conception that there are transfers between the two worlds (Mayo *et al*., 2006), nevertheless the question of the implications of performance in the virtual world on the behaviours in the real world of action remains controversial.

The transition from joystick-enabled execution of a virtual character in a war game, to joystick-enabled execution of a real man that appears as a target on a screen, or "operative images" as in the See-Shoot System, may be quick.[23] Because of the reduction of the sensory modalities almost exclusively to the visual, and the mediation that reduces the victim to a "target", this new pattern of military warfare is labelled "Nintendo warfare" and the participant soldiers are labelled "joystick soldiers" or "television warriors" (Brophy, 2013, pp.66-77). The video showing the operation of an unmanned vehicle by two IDF observers demonstrates the accuracy of the terms mentioned, and the leakage between the three fields.[24] Due to the alienation and mediation of the remote control of weapons systems and killing activity at a safe distance, this form of military warfare is perceived as a type of

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[23] "Operative images" are images that do not represent objects but are used as a starting point for action. See the film directed by Harun Farocki

[24] *Cf*. https://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3697502,00.html.

simulation. As Brophy notes, contemporary warfare is thus "*remarkably similar to a game*" (Brophy, 2013, p.72), and the Border Gatekeeper unmanned vehicle along Gaza fence or the See-Shoot System are only two examples of this contemporary approach.

The analogy between the See-Shoot System and digital games is evident in both the devices and metaphors used by the electronic observation controllers and the media.[25] An electronic observation controller with reference to the intermeshing of the worlds told interviewers from the human rights organization Breaking the Silence (*Shovrim Shtika*, 2011) : "*I remember it also seemed to me like a kind of computer game*, (…) *like you don't see it's really a human being* (…)".[26] I heard similar descriptions in a June 2018 conversation with N.L., an electronic observation operator of the See-Shoot System, who confirmed the analogy between video games and the weapons system. Another electronic observer testified in front of the camera: "*It was on the other side, it was like a video game. It's just a video game, it is as if one is detached from reality*".[27] The excitement involving "action" is shared by users of remote-controlled weaponry or military gaming. "*As if an 18-year-old girl is hectic and passionate that she too would have this gadget. That she would have something to work with, that she would have more 'action'*", explained another electronic observation controller.[28] Sparrow *et al*. (2015, p.8) found that both game enjoyment or entertainment experience are built into military simulations and training games. Both are programmed and designed to be "fun to play".

"Technology Makes it Easier" – The Virtualization of Violence

Like digital war-games that involve sitting on a chair and killing with remote control as part of the contemporary entertainment and military cultures, the See-Shoot System raises complex ethical and legal dilemmas, as well as psychological issues ; it challenges concepts such as the morality of war, combat, and spatial proximity (Kahn, 2002 ; Henriksen & Rignemose, 2015). The gap between the gaming and military worlds and the mental space between the actions of the eye (See) and of the finger (Shoot) are reduced to the mediation of computer consoles and the thickness of screens (Chamayou, 2015, pp.17-24). In such circumstances, the distinction between real and virtual combat becomes increasingly blurred. Contemporary technologies enable a new and intricate combination of physical distance and visual closeness. They make it possible for the electronic observation controller to see the opponent on the border area as if he were up close, and seemingly cancel out the anonymity afforded by the distance. At the same time, the digital mediation mitigates the sense of perceptual closeness, thus generating mental distance that can make it easier to kill (Braidotti, 2013, p.122).

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[25] "I don't want them to feel as if it's like Sony PlayStation", said a senior officer. "It's not easy to grab a joystick like in Sony PlayStation and kill" (Pepper, 2010).

[26] N°37, p.51 : http://www.shovrimshtika.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Women_Soldiers_Testimonies_2009_Heb.pdf.

[27] *Cf*. https://www.shovrimshtika.org/testimonies/videos/98467.

[28] *Cf*. https://www.shovrimshtika.org/testimonies/videos/82630?sg=1.

The electronic observation controllers along the border with Gaza have several ways of coping with the psychological dilemmas involved in sitting comfortably on a chair and killing from a distance by means of pushing a button or moving the joystick that "*makes somebody die two miles away from you*", as one told to interviewers from the human rights organization Breaking the Silence.[29] She talked about a depersonalized process using professional terminology : "*It's actually part of all the technological developments of the military industry* (…). *Technology makes it easier* (…). *You distance yourself, you alienate yourself, isolate and sever and then it's easier to do the job*".[30] Her estrangement has two aspects : she is using the Hebrew masculine form, and associates herself with the image of the military industry and technology. Others resort to ethical and emotional rationalization to overcome the human reluctance of taking human life: "It's for defence" – of the family, home, friends, and State.[31]

Long-range missiles, high-tech weaponry, "smart bombs", and remote-control weaponry such as See-Shoot are part of the devices that turn killing into "sanitized warfare". The psychological mechanisms indicated above are collectively referred to as "depersonalized killing", and are used by both military organizations and individual soldiers to avoid empathy for victims, and to minimize the psychological implications of killing (Grossman, 1996, pp.97-128, 156-172, 188). In addition, the See-Shoot system enables the electronic observation controllers to see and shoot without being seen (or being shot at). Remotely controlled weapons systems radiate military power without vulnerability. The physical distance is intended, as suggested and marketed by the Rafael website, to "reduce the number of front line soldiers and enhances survivability"[32] (women soldiers' in our case study) and is a pivotal advantage of the system described as "warfare without risk" (Kahn, 2002).[33] The "television warriors" never face the prospect of being killed in action. This is asymmetrical warfare, a strategy in which only one side is exposed to mortal risk (Chamayou, 2015, pp.17–24 ; Henriksen & Ringsmose, 2015). It undermines the principle of reciprocity that is central to the justification of warfare within the boundaries of traditional military ethics (Kahn, 2002, p.2). As Der Derian (2009, p.121) notes, "*with the virtualization of violence comes the disappearance of war as we have known it*".

A Hybrid Situation between Policing and Fighting

Asymmetry is one of the reasons why the contemporary use of State violence along the borders is perceived more like policing and less like fighting : "*Without the imposition of mutual risk, warfare is not war at all* (…). *It most resembles police enforcement*" (Kahn, 2002, p.4). According to Paul Kahn, Western armies are increasingly involved in policing borders rather than in traditional fighting, indicating "*a transition from combat to policing*"

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[29] *Ibid*.

[30] *Ibid*.

[31] *Cf*. http://www.idftweets.co.il/article.php?id=403.

[32] *Cf*. http://www.rafael.co.il/marketing/SIP_STORAGE/FILES/4/1104.pdf.

[33] The paradox of riskless warfare, as suggested by Kahn, is that the military's capabilitys to use force without risk poses risk to the lives of non-combatants (Kahn, 2002, p.2).

(*ibid*., p. 7). Following Kahn, the shooting by electronic observation controllers using Rafael's system is more akin to law enforcement than to combat. In his article "Who is a combatant ?", Zalmanovich (2014, p.58) makes similar claims, referring to the Gaza electronic observation controllers' military activity as "*killing*" rather than "*fighting in a battlefield*", for the same reason IDF decided not to define the electronic observation controllers as combatants.

The change conceptualized by Kahn from combat to policing is compatible with the analysis of the See-Shoot System as representing a shift from combat to combat support activity (not without gender discrimination overtones in this case study), and from pulling the trigger to pressing a joystick. The motivation to convert traditional political conflicts into matters of law enforcement under the paradigm of policing has been driven by the revolution in military technology, and by the idea that international politics is now subsumed under the criminal law paradigm. These shifts do not entirely dispel the confusion between the traditional battlefield morality and the morality appropriate for contemporary policing (Kahn, 2002, p.6).[34]

Indeed, with reference to the specific situation along the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel, where State military forces (IDF) are faced with militias (Hamas), guerrillas and various militant Palestinian organizations (e.g., the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, etc.) and civilian protesters (for instance, as part of the March-June 2018 "Great March of Return",[35] or of the "Friday of Tires Protest"). I consider it more a hybrid situation between policing and traditional combat, or a police/ war assemblage.

The Palestinian protests along the security fence and Israel's political and military responses bring back and reflect the traditional concepts of territorial border, sovereignty and traditional warfare. At the same time, when Israel dropped "Stay away from border fence" leaflets on Gaza, Defence Minister Liberman warned the Palestinians:

> The directive is not to allow Israeli sovereignty to be harmed (...). We will try to keep them in the buffer zone, not to allow them to approach the fence, anyone who violates Israeli sovereignty will be hurt (…). There are hundreds of snipers who will know how to identify the rioters (...) and we will hurt them [Zeitun & Somfalvi, 2018].

During this period, the complex task of the Gaza electronic observation controllers was to prevent some 40,000 Palestinians from crossing into Israeli territory by identifying suspects approaching the border fence, while quickly distinguishing between armed men,

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[34] Yet the ethos of (local and international) policing is the same as that of ordinary criminal law enforcement. Individuals are the targets of police action because of what they have done, not because of who they are (Kahn, 2002, p.4).
[35] The "Great March of Return", named after what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba, and their demand of the right to return to the homes and land they were expelled from 70 years ago. Ideologically and tactically, the demonstrators were following a path laid down by South Africa during its struggle against apartheid. Palestinian health officials say that since the protests along the Gaza border began on March 30, 112 Palestinians were killed and over 13,190 Palestinians were injured by Israeli troops (as of 21 May 2018). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Gaza_border_protests ; https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5222725,00.html.

key rioters, unarmed and uninvolved civilian demonstrators, unarmed shepherds, and civilians who cross the fence deliberately to get caught (Zeitun, 2018). As already mentioned, the unit operating the See-Shoot system is not the only IDF unit active along the border with Gaza. There are other troops that use more traditional methods : outfits from the southern brigade reinforced with two brigades and special units, including Maglan, and hundreds of snipers.[36] Clouds of thick black smoke from burning tires are one tactic that the Palestinians protesters used along the fence, between March and May 2018, as cover against Israeli snipers on the Israeli side of the border, and against constant observation by the advanced technology of the See-Shoot System (Bʙᴄ News, 2018).[37]

Epilogue : See-Shoot, Border Surveillance & Nintendo Warfare

The semantic shift from the expression "the eyes of the State" used by an IDF combatant in the 1973 war to its use by an electronic observation controller using the See-Shoot System in 2011 illustrates the complex change that has affected perceptions of contemporary warfare and border control, as well as the hybrid situation which now prevails. The situation near the Gaza border can be characterized as resulting from a police-military fusion. It is a cross between an offensive and an offensive-preventive strategy, and between battleground and surveillance/ border control technologies – a combination of face-to-face combat interaction and killing mediated by the digitalization of warfare. These hybrid situations involve computer games, military simulators and combat episodes all combined, and are aptly articulated verbally, in the case of the See-Shoot system, by the words "see" and "shoot", and visually by the hyphen between them.

Yet, the recent events of March-May 2018 on the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel indicate that with regard to this region, conceptual changes relating to borders and border management are inconclusive. Despite the technological advances that have become part of the scene, the current conduct of the forces on both sides of the border combines advanced tracking technologies with traditional weaponry as well as traditional combat methods such as sniping, water hoses, burning tires, Molotov cocktails or fire kites.[38]

This does not diminish the qualities that have been revealed regarding the operation of military systems that rely on war games and military games, just as this does not hint at the disappearance of the moral dilemmas to which the article pointed. Just as training using simulations creates depersonalization (Grossman, 1996, pp.177-183), actual fighting via a computer console could turn into a performance act. Detecting, tracking and killing people, as when operating See-Shoot, can become mere events in a sanitized multi-user game. With reference to Rafael's system, another, usually hidden aspect, must be highlighted, one that is implicit in the see-shoot continuum. The immediate associative link combines the

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[36] *Cf.* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza_Division.

[37] "Did Israel use excessive force at Gaza protests ?", *BBC News*, 17 May 2018 : http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-44124556.

[38] Amir Bochbot, "Dozens cut the fence : The observer who foiled the infiltration into Gaza recovers", *Walla News*, 14 October 2018 : https://news.walla.co.il/item/3193096.

visual element with a weapons system, but the third field – that of digital games – also reveals the pleasure associated with the world of entertainment gaming, an issue hardly referred to in the literature. If technology affects consciousness, the realistic elements shared by the military and gaming worlds only intensify the gaming pleasure of tracking human characters on a screen. From a Foucauldian perspective, together with the satisfaction derived from demonstrating good skills while sitting in front of a screen, Nintendo warfare also points to the hybridization of the body as a site of regimentation (in real military contexts) and as a site of pleasure (in gaming contexts) – i.e. to the contemporary soldierly body as a site of both discipline and enjoyment.

The banalization of violence and warfare and the enmeshing of the military and gaming worlds were articulated in 2016 in an experiential internet game : "Eyes of the IDF". This special project by Israel's leading news website, Ynet, offers users the possibility "*to check if you are as sharp as IDF observers : watch the special video, answer the questions, and see how much the terrorist can fear when you're on duty, share your score with friends*".[39] Designed for the general public and distributed through civilian media, this game could only be developed with the support and collaboration of the military, highlighting the convergence of interests and platforms between the military and the gaming industry. It allows military action to become part of the daily culture, and sheds light on the pleasurable user experience involved in the legitimation of the use of force and the militarization of Israeli society.

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[39] *Cf*. http://z.ynet.co.il/short/content/2017/EyesIDF.

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