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A NEW TYPE OF COLONIALISM: EXTERNALIZATION OF BORDERS IN AFRICA AS AN ATTEMPT OF DOMINATION OF WESTERN COUNTRIES

If one does not examine colonialism, its social and intellectual basis, its stable and changing aspects and the long-term tragic complications it generated. It is impossible to explain why, after independence, Africa's desire for freedom and the expected prosperity did not come true. In Africa, classical colonialism began in the 19th century. Like the colonization of America and the Atlantic slave trade, it was systemic violence – organized, continuous, methodical and deliberate. It was integral part of colonialism, as rac-

ism was. Colonialism is based on epistemological and ontological biases that promote establishing Western hegemony and superiority, while devaluing, marginalizing and undermining knowledge, experience and rights of colonized peoples.[5]

The debate about colonialism in Africa died down for several decades after most African countries gained independence. Africans believed that Europeans were gone forever, therefore, the inhabitants of the continent could move forward unhindered, enjoy their freedom and prosperity that, in their opinion, would soon come. But the euphoria and rising expectations were quickly replaced by disappointment and despair, because colonialism left behind its lasting legacy, including not only political and economic, but also cultural, intellectual and social one, that supported European domination. After independence, the deficient colonial state turned into a neo-colonial machine that not only oppressed the people, but also worked in interests of the former colonial powers and their allies.

Modern colonialism of a new type revives the old system of colonial exploitation and oppression, which disguis-

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[5] *Bulhan H. A.* Stages of Colonialism in Africa: From Occupation of Land to Occupation of Being // Journal of Social and Political Psychology. 2015. Vol. 3, № 1. URL: https://jspp.psychopen.eu/index.php/jspp/article/view/4853 (accessed: 20.04.2024).

es itself under the more cunning euphemism of globalization. The old and crude forms of colonial rule are being replaced by the more subtle and sophisticated, and simultaneously more intense and expansive form – consolidation of capitalism, liberal democracy and Western culture into a single and globalized force purposed for economic, political and cultural domination. The globalization ideology and values imply the interconnected and interdependent world with a common set of international laws, markets and monetary standards, formulated and regulated by so-called "neutral institutions", such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank or the European Union. Ideology of the new-type colonialism is neoliberalism, which implies global economic integration, elimination of restrictions on the capital movement and flexible migration laws.

Under the auspices of neoliberalism, migration has become the third pillar of globalization, along with trade and finance. In the 1990s, when globalization had already taken features of obvious economic reality, supporters of the liberal path of development suggested the hypothesis that growth of illegal or unregulated migration was one of many symptoms of declining state sovereignty. They speculated how soon the universal regime would emerge, under which international agreements and conventions, as well as the rights acquired by migrants themselves, would gradually replace States in terms of controlling immigration.[1] Arguing that migrants to be illegal should enjoy a number of inalienable rights, human-rights defenders in Western host countries have begun protecting this growing category. Two decades later, disappointment seems to have taken over. And today, on the African continent, EU leaders impose new forms of colonialism as paramilitary border controls. Diplomats of the EU and its member countries have repeatedly stated that Europe's border does not run in the Mediterranean, but, for example, in Sudan and Niger, which implies that European territorial control over Africa has never really ceased.

The reason for this resumption of European interaction with the African territory – and not just in terms of political and economic dominance – is largely due to one factor: the desire to control migration. Increase in the number of refugees seeking to enter Europe, especially after the war in Syria, has pushed migration to the top of the political agenda, releasing significant resources for border control. Since 2005, funding for the European Coast Guard and Border Control Agency Frontex has grown by incredible 5,233% – from 6 million euros to 320 million euros in 2018.[2] The EU has made migration control the central task of its international policy and its relations with third countries, insisting on border control agreements to be concluded with over 35 countries, for the purpose of controlling migration, which is referred to in Commission terms as "externalization of borders". According to these agreements, the signatory countries must accept migrants deported from Europe, tighten border controls and the number of personnel at the borders, introduce new biometric identification and passport systems to control migrants, and build camps for detained refugees.

The EU explains that externalization will supposedly prevent the death of refugees, but the real goal of European countries is to try to stop refugees long before they reach European shores. Elimination of cross-border dynamics in the so-called "enlarged Mediterranean" has become a major security challenge for the European Union, with Libya and Sahel countries, such as Niger, Chad, Mali and Burkina Faso occupying an important place in this overall strategy. The EU global security strategy "Shared Vision, Common Approach: A Stronger Europe", presented at this organization's summit in June 2016, expresses its determination to strengthen border protection and maritime security.[3] On February 3, 2017, in Malta, the heads of the EU state and government adopted the so-called Malta Declaration, in which they confirmed their readiness to support this policy and agreed on a set of measures to curb the flow of illegal migrants from Libya to the EU through Italy.[4]

Acting on the basis of the EU declaration and the bilateral Italian-Libyan memorandum of understanding dated February 2, 2017, Italy has made significant efforts to strengthen Libya's capability to control its southern border, guided by the conviction expressed by the Internal Affairs Minister M. Minniti that "closing the southern border of Libya means closing the southern border of Europe."[5] Italy provided assistance in constructing border control infrastructure in southern Libya. Another area, which Italy has shown interest in, is creation of so-called "temporary camps", detention centres for apprehended illegal migrants. Both sides agreed to improve the current 34 such centres, which are under the exclusive control of the Libyan Ministry of Internal Affairs. In these camps, illegal migrants are temporarily held pending voluntary or forced repatriation to their countries of origin. To make this possible, Italy and Libya persuade African states to agree to the return of their citizens and to facilitate conclusion of readmission agreements. Improving the infrastructure and financing these camps were supposed at the expense of both Italy and the EU. According to the memorandum, the Libyan Coast Guard has the right to intercept ships bound for Italy and return all the passengers to the disembarkation zones in Libya, where detained migrants are held in camps supported by the EU. For Libya, prolonged detention is a common decision, and major EU financial support has been allocated to developing the infrastructure for detention of migrants in Libya.[6]

The idea of a Western state or a group of them contributing to maintenance of refugees and migrants in a border country is not innovative, it has already been used in the EU – Turkey declaration of March 18, 2016. Implementation of this plan has caused the public's contradicto-

[1] *Menz G.* Neo-Liberalism, Privatization and the Outsourcing of Migration Management: A Five-Country Comparison // Competition and Change. 2011. № 15 (2). P. 116–135.

[2] *Buxton N., Akkerman M.* The Rise of Border Imperialism. Roar Magazine. URL: https://roarmag.org/magazine/border-imperialism-europe-africa/ (accessed: 20.04.2024).

[3] Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. 2016. URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf (accessed: 20.04.2024).

[4] EC (European Council). Malta Declaration by the Members of the European Council on the External Aspects of Migration: Addressing the Central Mediterranean Route. 2017. URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/02/03/malta-declaration/ (accessed: 20.04.2024).

[5] Libia, le tribù del Sud siglano la pace e si impegnano a bloccare i migranti // La Stampa. 2017. 2 Apr. URL: https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2017/04/02/news/libia-le-tribu-del-sud-siglano-a-pace-e-si-impegnano-a-bloccare-i-migranti-1.34610687/ (accessed: 20.04.2024).

[6] See: *Жерлицына Н. А.* Стратегия ЕС в отношении центрально-средиземноморского маршрута миграции и пострадавших транзитных государств Сахеля и Ливии // Геополитика и экогеодинамика регионов. 2022. Т. 8, № 3. С. 51–59.

ry reaction and experts' criticism. The Libyan case differs from the Turkish one in several aggravating circumstances. First of all, the civil war in Libya is in full swing, therefore the country is still far from stable and effective governance. This is not applicable to Turkey, where, although the state of emergency has been declared, its Government fully controls the entire national territory. Secondly, Libya is a transit country for so-called mixed flows consisting of economic migrants and persons in need of international protection. In practice, in absence of state authorities in Fezzan, "temporary camps" are often not controlled by state authorities, and it is almost impossible to access them. The EU and Italy have agreements only with the Government of National Accord, one of the actors of the civil war in Libya. Another actor, the government in Tobruk, which controls significant part of the country's territory, has signed no agreements with the EU and the Italian government and, therefore, does not participate in implementing these agreements.[1]

The EU considers military intervention in new regional theatres of war the main method of solving security problems related to migration. The EU is the largest donor to the multinational Sahel armed forces, known as the G5, which includes troops from Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Burkina Faso. As part of this policy, Italy has deployed three police units for supporting Libyan border control, law enforcement and criminal justice. For the EU, Niger is the country of origin for the majority of migrants arriving in Italy via Libya, therefore, this state is given special attention in the Union's strategy. For the period 2017–2020, the EU financial contribution to the mission in Niger amounted to about 1 billion Euros.[2] Several military missions were deployed there: France sent 500 military personnel to its base in Niamey, opened additional bases in Madama and Aguelala; 50 German soldiers are also stationed in Niamey. In 2018, Italy began deploying its contingent to Niger. 470 military personnel were part of intelligence and command and control groups, instructors, medical personnel, engineers for assisting in infrastructure work, units for combating chemical, biological and radiological threats, as well as units for collecting information, surveillance and reconnaissance.[3]

The above measures have allowed the EU to effectively reduce unauthorized entry into Europe. But, paradoxically, illegal migration along the Central Mediterranean route is currently more deadly than ever before. According to the 2018 World Migration Report, the Mediterranean Sea is the deadliest border on the planet.[4] Numerous victims along this maritime border are closely related to the EU restrictive migration policy and comprehensive measures aimed at curbing illegal migration. Management of the EU borders is increasingly carried out outside the EU member states' jurisdiction, in the border areas and in the countries neighboring the EU. This is done through more or less formalized extraterritorial agreements between the EU and third coun-

tries. The expanding networks of intergovernmental actions on asylum and migration prevent both departure and entry of migrants without documents. The EU border controls are increasingly carried out in transit or sending countries outside the EU through policies of curbing migration or detaining migrants. These measures are aimed at preventing illegal migrants from entering the EU, where they could get permission to seek asylum. They are also aimed at deterring potential migrants from traveling to the EU at all. Traditional surveillance of external borders is increasingly complemented by pre-border controls in a non-EU country in front of the borders of receiving countries, along migration routes in international waters or in the territories of transit and sending countries. Intercepted illegal migrants are usually readmitted to third countries and detained there. This means that measures for ensuring compliance with its migration policy, taken within the sovereign powers of one state, are implemented and imposed in territories other than its own. This also means that there is no direct link between the state's physical territory and the persons whose rights are affected. Externalization of border management in the EU usually entails outsourcing or subcontracting these functions to neighboring countries.[5] Unauthorized agents are involved in migration management, as well as decision-making on sensitive issues such as imprisoning illegal migrants.[6]

Thus, detained stateless persons turn out to be completely rightless and often at the mercy of individuals without official powers. Migrants who leave Libya for reaching Europe, when intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard, are usually deprived of access to standard asylum procedures and the opportunity for contacting European states' authorities, which exercise their powers through local agents in a third country. Along with this, migrants' chances to influence an European country's decision decrease. They cannot efficiently file their asylum applications, as well as cannot challenge the way their cases are handled or ignored. Illegal migrants are absolutely vulnerable to arbitrary, uncontrolled power being exercised over them because of their status.[7]

There is an obvious causal relationship between such EU migration policy and many human victims among illegal migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The EU has closed legal entry routes, forcing migrants to make risky illegal trips and rely on traffickers and smugglers to move. The EU has taken measures for blocking the remaining illegal entry routes and detaining those who were able to break through heavily guarded borders. In case of Libya, both victims at sea and violence in detention camps were predictable damages that could have been avoided if appropriate actions had been taken. As stated in the 2019 Report of the UN Mission in Libya and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, conditions of detention in these centers are "generally inhumane and far from meeting international human rights standards."[8] They

[1] *Жерлицына Н. А.* Op. cit.

[2] *Lebovich A.* The real Reason UN Troops are in Niger // Foreign Policy. 2017. 27 Oct. URL: https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/27/the-real-reason-u-s-troops-are-in-niger/ (accessed: 20.04.2024).

[3] La Camera approva la missione in Niger: 470 uomini contro il traffico di esseri umani // La Repubblica. 2018. 17 Jan. URL: https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2018/01/17/news/camera_approva_missione_niger-186698741/ (accessed: 20.04.2024).

[4] *McAuliffe M., Ruhs M.* World Migration Report 2018 // International Organization for Migration (IOM) Report. 2018. URL: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf (accessed: 20.04.2024).

[5] *Kim S.* Non-Refoulement and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction: State Sovereignty and Migration Controls at Sea in the European Context // Leiden Journal of International Law. 2017. № 30 (1). P. 49–70.

[6] *Жерлицына Н. А.* Op. cit.

[7] Ibid.

[8] UNOHCHR and UNSMIL 2019. Detained and Dehumanised: Report on Human Rights Abuses against Migrants in Libya. URL: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/DetainedAndDehumanised_en.pdf (accessed: 20.04.2024).

are characterized by severe overcrowding, insufficient ventilation and poor hygiene. Migrants constantly suffer there from malnutrition and limited or no access to medical care. They are usually subjected to torture and other ill-treatment by guards, mainly for the purpose of extorting money from their relatives for their release. Women are often victims of rape or other forms of sexual violence. The EU intervention actually has led to resurgence of the slave trade in Africa: refugees were sold as slaves.

Thus, today, European countries, due to their wealth and influence, are able to close their external borders almost hermetically by making huge investments in complex control systems and concluding agreements with transit countries that protect their interests in preventing unwanted migrants. This ability has a significant impact on the situation of the already defenseless and disenfranchised people from poor countries.

When groups of wealthy countries, such as EU member states, come together to stop unauthorized immigration into their jurisdiction and reach agreement to do so efficiently, disadvantaged neighboring countries tend to have to accept large numbers of illegal immigrants who are banned from entering the EU and who have "nowhere else to go". That is, measures taken by the EU to ensure compliance with its own migration policy are implemented and have an impact on territories other than their own. While strengthening the external borders of the Schengen region is a key objective of the EU internal migration policy, cooperation with third countries in the field of migration control has become a key feature of its external migration policy over the past decade. In close cooperation with third countries, the EU has managed to curb the outflow of migrants from transit and sending countries.[1]

But the actions of the European Union raise doubts about their compliance with international law and its own declared principles of human rights protection. Paradoxically, when it comes to their own interests, the countries that have led the way in developing and disseminating standards and procedures that protect human rights have done everything to prevent asylum seekers from setting foot on their territory. In fact, migrants are not allowed to appear on the EU doorstep, which apparently exempts EU member states from the human rights obligations they have assumed. The activities of the institute of extraterritorial migration management, practiced regarding the Central Mediterranean route, can hardly be justified by reducing the number of migrants arriving from Libya, because this was achieved at the cost of human rights violations.[2]

Such border controls are a form of new colonialism, as they include population displacement, criminalization, racial hierarchy and exploitation of people. Borders are walls designed to block huge disparity between Africa and Europe, built during the colonial era and perpetuated by European economic and political policies today.

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[1] *Жерлицына Н. А.* Op. cit.
[2] Ibid.