Discourses of "Europeanness" in Asylum Practices in the Postcolonial Context

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Abstract. This article examines the impact of ethno-racial factors on perceptions of refugees and asylum practices in the European postcolonial context. Using Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) the authors analyse "Europe for Europeans" public discourse against the backdrop of the 2015—2016 migration crisis, the humanitarian disaster on the Polish-Belarusian border in 2021 and asylum seekers' influx in spring 2022. The study shows that attitudes to refugees and their "right" to asylum in a European country are impacted by ethno-racial markers of applicants. Such discursive practices call into question one of the understandings of Europeanness, namely Europe as the embodiment of advanced political ethics, since European political discourse has recently positioned a refugee from the Middle East and North Africa as an "alien" "non-European," thus normalizing threats to human life in allegedly "uncivilized" parts of the world. This normalization is consequently affecting the decision making in asylum process. The problematization of discursive aspects of asylum allows us to expand DHA to the international sphere, where different national models and cultural contexts collide, allowing us to talk about the influence of discursive practices on the political decisions in international relations. The evolution of the concept of asylum in the postcolonial context is considered in connection with the ideology of Europeanism, which is currently in the process of formation. Although ideas about Europeanness have undergone major transformations, this study shows that a systematic study of the entire range of conceptual meanings of this discursive object has not yet been carried out. Thus, Europeanness is either interpreted as a set of desired social ideals and values, or, reductively, as a quality associated exclusively with European institutions in their current form. Both interfere with the postcolonial debate about the nature of "Europe" and "Europeanness" in the postcolonial world.

Key words: Europeanism, refugees, Europe, postcolonial studies, political discourse, ethnicity, race, asylum

Дискурсы «европейскости» в практике предоставления убежища в постколониальном контексте

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Аннотация. Исследуется влияние этнорасовых факторов на восприятие беженцев и практику предоставления убежища в контексте европейского постколониализма. С опорой на дискурсивно-исторический подход авторы анализируют общественный дискурс «Европа для европейцев» с отсылкой к миграционному

кризису 2015—2016 гг., гуманитарной катастрофе на польско-белорусской границе в 2021 г. и наплыву вынужденных мигрантов в поисках убежища весной 2022 г. Показано, как в европейских странах этнорасовые маркеры беженцев во многом определяют отношение к ним и их «праву» на убежище. Рассмотренные в ходе исследования дискурсивные практики ставят под сомнение одно из представлений о «европейскости», а именно Европу как воплощение передовой политической этики, поскольку европейский политический дискурс позиционирует беженца из Ближнего Востока и Северной Африки как «чужого» «неевропейца», тем самым нормализуя угрозы жизни в якобы «нецивилизованных» частях мира, что в конечном итоге влияет на сам процесс предоставления убежища. Проблематизация предоставления убежища позволяет перенести дискурсивно-исторический анализ в международную сферу, где сталкиваются различные национальные модели и культурные контексты. В конечном счете дискурсивные практики так или иначе влияют на соответствующие политические решения. Эволюция концепции убежища в постколониальном контексте рассматривается в связи с идеологией «европейства», которая в настоящее время находится в процессе формирования. Хотя представления о «европейскости» существенно изменились, в науке о международных отношениях вряд ли можно найти системное исследование всего диапазона концептуальных значений этого дискурсивного объекта. «Европейскость» интерпретируется либо как набор желаемых социальных идеалов и ценностей, либо в редуктивном ключе как качество, связанное исключительно с европейскими институтами в их нынешнем виде. Обе трактовки влияют на характер дискурса о природе «Европы» и «европейскости» в постколониальном мире.

Ключевые слова: европейскость, беженцы, Европа, постколониальные исследования, политический дискурс, этничность, раса, предоставление убежища

Introduction

An article titled "Europe has rediscovered compassion for refugees — but only if they are white,"[1] published in March 2022 in the British Guardian, highlighted a topic that began to be talked about several years ago, namely: what role can ethnicity and race play in granting asylum. A selective approach — at border crossings for asylum seekers, in the application process, and in designing of national and regional asylum programs — shows that modern asylum practices are not solemnly based on a finding of persecution or threat to life in line with international conventions, but might also have colonial "overtones."

The article examines the image of a refugee as it has been formed today in the European postcolonial context, and speculates on the role ethno-racial factors might play in this discursive object of knowledge. First, we will provide examples of ethno-racial bias in public discourse in European context, then suggest how these instances of public discourse are related to the evolution of the concept of asylum in a postcolonial context and in relation to the emergence of the welfare state, and then we will connect this to the ideology of Europeanism, which is now under construction.

"Europe for Europeans" — Discourses of Color and Race in the Border-crossing Process

Crossing borders and providing an individual with the opportunity to settle in a new country are normally highly politicised and pollicised practices in any state. However, "political impartiality" in asylum matters is just a myth, which has been repeatedly noted by researchers who pointed out the politicization of asylum decisions both at the stage of assessing the application and in court (see, for example: (Martén, 2015)). At the same time, a number of authors accuse "authoritarian regimes" of using migrants as a

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[1] Howden D. Europe Has Rediscovered Compassion for Refugees — But Only If They're White // The Guardian. March 10, 2022. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/mar/10/europe-compassion-refugees-white-european (accessed: 27.07.2022).

political weapon (for example, see: (Jennequin, 2020)) — a claim, which leads to the dehumanization and depersonalization of refugees, ascribing them the role of a political instrument. Thus, the politicization of the practices of making migration decisions and granting asylum is well known today.

In this article, we want to address a less studied aspect of asylum and migration procedures, and specifically consider ethno-racial bias in related practices. Eyewitness reports on the asylum and refugee website[2] prove discriminatory behavior by some white Europeans towards refugees of color. These phenomena were already visible during the migration crisis of 2015—2016 (Potemkina, 2016, p. 39; Zharkova & Kuznetsova, 2018, pp. 116—118), cried for attention in the humanitarian catastrophe on the Poland — Belarus border in 2021, and were widespread on the Poland — Ukraine border in spring 2022.

In spring 2022, people from African and Arab countries living in Ukraine spoke about the difficulties they faced on the Polish border while escaping military actions.[3] They had to wait for hours at the checkpoints to let the "native people" go ahead, and some of them, especially those of dark skin, were denied entry into the country for no apparent reason and got stuck at the border. Harsh statements, including those by journalists, and cases of open xenophobia were so numerous that the African Union issued a statement saying: "All people have the right to cross international borders during conflict, and as such, should enjoy the same rights to cross to safety from the conflict in Ukraine, notwithstanding their nationality or racial identity."[4]

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), recognizing the fact of discrimination against refugees based on skin color faced by third-country nationals seeking international protection in Poland, in a special tweet called for support for refugees regardless of race and skin color.[5] The Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association also issued a statement condemning journalists' on-the-spot reports that could suggest that tragedies and conflicts are simply normal in some parts of the world,[6] and thereby discriminate against entire regions of the world. The Indian television program Gravitas accused Western media of broadcasting "white supremacy" messages by raising race and color issues in their asylum reports.[7]

The situation worsened against the backdrop of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) of 2001[8] being activated. This

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[2] Informing Humanitarians Worldwide 24/7 // United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. URL: reliefweb.int (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[3] See: Ukraine: UN Experts Concerned by Reports of Discrimination against People of African Descent at Border // United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. March 3, 2022. URL: https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-un-experts-concerned-reports-discrimination-against-people-african-descent (accessed: 27.07.2022); Ukraine: Unequal Treatment for Foreigners Attempting to Flee // Human Rights Watch. March 4, 2022. URL: https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/04/ukraine-unequal-treatment-foreigners-attempting-flee (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[4] Statement of the African Union on the Reported Ill Treatment of Africans Trying to Leave Ukraine // African Union. February 28, 2022. URL: https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/41534-pr-english.pdf (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[5] UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency // Twitter. February 27, 2022. URL: https://twitter.com/Refugees/status/1498042002633596930?s=20&t=m8cIOaSVaT3HCobCIvrXyg (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[6] Journalists' Body Warns of Racism, Biases in Western Media Coverage of Ukraine // The Wire. March 1, 2022. URL: https://thewire.in/media/ameja-ukraine-crisis-racism-bias-western-media (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[7] Gravitas: Western Media's Racist Reportage on Ukrainian Refugees // WION YouTube Channel. February 28, 2022. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBRwmTVVKQk (accessed: 28.07.2022).

[8] Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on Minimum Standards for Giving Temporary Protection in the Event of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons and on Measures Promoting a Balance of Efforts Between Member States in Receiving Such Persons and Bearing the Consequences Thereof // EUR-Lex. July 20, 2001. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:32001L0055 (accessed: 27.07.2022).

tool was developed after the end of the active phase of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and, if activated, facilitates temporary asylum and access to the labor market without a lengthy procedure of individual application consideration for a refugee status. However, this mechanism (TPD) was not activated to provide asylum to those who were leaving the war zone in Syria or Afghanistan. For the first time, the Directive was activated to Ukrainian refugees in March 2022.[9]

In her article, O.Yu. Potemkina notes that "it turned out to be much more difficult for ministers to reach an agreement on the status of third-country nationals" among refugees from Ukraine to the European Union. Some states, primarily Poland, insisted on applying temporary protection only to people with Ukrainian passports. The French presidency succeeded in bringing the [EU] Council to a compromise, according to which third-country nationals were able to claim national, but not European, temporary protection" (Potemkina, 2022, p. 10). Eugenio Ambrosi, regional director of the International Organization for Migrations' Regional Office for the EU, also argues that "after 20 years from being drafted, TPD has been put into action, but it applies only for Ukrainian nationals fleeing the war, it doesn't apply for any other nationality fleeing the same war."[10] He also highlighted the difficult situation of African students who studied in Ukraine, but for whom the TPD does not apply, unlike Ukrainians.

The most striking examples of "politically incorrect" statements by journalists referring to race, origin and ethnicity of refugees became quite widely known, were numerous and, we argue, should be considered not as separate clumsy remarks, but as an inherent part of public discourse, reflecting the ideologies widely spread in European public sphere and at the same time shaping our ideas about it. The article uses the method of Discourse-Historical analysis (DHA). Developed by Ruth Wodak, DHA seeks to analyse discourses in order to find meanings that define "the internal logic of any organization, [the logic] that is constantly in action, driven by routine models and rituals" (Wodak, 2009, p. 16).

This method allows us to trace how individual social representations are embedded in social practices using various instances of discourse, including analysis of symbols and discursive strategies, public and "backstage" discursive practices, politicians' speeches and political stories initiated by the mass media. R. Wodak suggests considering the interaction of the political and media in the process of constructing the image of political reality as "engaging in politics is built on a broad cultural context, determined by national traditions and political systems, models and values of national and professional communication" (Wodak, 2009, p. 26). This method, if applied to the problematization of asylum, expands DHA into the international sphere, where different national models and cultural contexts collide, allowing us to speak about the influence of discursive practices on the decision-making process in international relations.

We will investigate now some discursive models that have accompanied the border-crossing by migrants seeking asylum since February 2022 and its media coverage. In spring 2022, Kelly Cobiella, a correspondent for the American channel NBC News, said on a live transmission: "These are not refugees from Syria; these are refugees from Ukraine…

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[9] Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 Establishing the Existence of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons from Ukraine Within the Meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and Having the Effect of Introducing Temporary Protection // EUR-Lex. March 04, 2022. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022D0382 (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[10] Eugenio Ambrosi at the "Externalizing EU Migration Management Policies" Conference [17:04—17:46] // Migration Policy Center YouTube Channel. October 20, 2022. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwYQQWTtvbE&list=LL&index=4 (accessed: 18.11.2022).

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They're Christian, they're white, they're very similar (to us)."[11] Her colleague, CBS News correspondent Charles D'Agata, who was in Kiev in February 2022, also stated live: "This isn't a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades, but a relatively civilized, relatively European city."[12]

Al-Jazeera host Peter Dobby looked at how the refugees were dressed: "These are prosperous, middle-class people. These are not obviously refugees trying to get away from the Middle East... or North Africa. They look like any European family that you'd live next door to."[13]

A correspondent for the French channel BFM TV in Kiev remarked: "We are in the 21st century, we are in a European city and we have cruise missile fire as though we were in Iraq or Afghanistan, can you imagine!?"[14] In another report from the same channel, you can find the following: "It's an important question. We're not talking here about Syrians fleeing... We're talking about Europeans."[15] The British channel ITV News commented on the events as follows: "The unthinkable has happened... This is not a developing, third world nation; this is Europe."[16]

Not only televised emotional reports from the spot contained such statements, but there were plenty of them in newspaper articles. The Daily Telegraph published an article by Daniel Hannan, which claimed that: "This time, war is wrong because the people look like us and have Instagram[17] and Netflix accounts. It's not in a poor, remote country anymore."[18] Similar statements were heard from VIP officials. For example, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria in 2021—2022 Kirill Petkov said: "These are Europeans, intelligent, educated people, some of them are programmers. We, like everyone else, are ready to welcome them. This is not the usual refugee wave of people with an unclear past. None of the European countries is worried about them."[19] In the BBC studio, Ukraine's former deputy chief prosecutor in 2015—2016, David Sakvarelidze announced: "It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed."[20]

Thus, we see that the emotional response in the aforementioned quotes is caused not just by threats to peoples' lives, but by the fact that these people do not look like those refugees whose images were repeatedly broadcast by the media in the 21st century. Let us pay attention to the Foucauldian silences of the discourse. Age and gender as categories that are traditionally mentioned in reports about refugees represent notable discursive absences. For example, the suffering of children was a

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[11] Western Coverage of Ukraine Exposes Deep-Seated Racist Bias, Double Standards // China Daily. March 17, 2022. URL: https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202203/17/WS6232d578a310fd2b29e5187f.html (accessed: 28.07.2022).

[12] Western Coverage of Ukraine Exposes Deep-Seated Racist Bias, Double Standards // China Daily. March 17, 2022. URL: https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202203/17/WS6232d578a310fd2b29e5187f.html (accessed: 28.07.2022).

[13] Al-Jazeera // Twitter. February 27, 2022. URL: https://twitter.com/AlanRMacLeod/status/1497976546170216448 (accessed: 27.07.2021).

[14] BFM TV (France) // Twitter. February 27, 2022. URL: https://twitter.com/AlanRMacLeod/status/1497977015663796229 (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[15] BFM TV (France) // Twitter. February 27, 2022. URL: https://twitter.com/AlanRMacLeod/status/1497984372414156800 (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[16] ITV (UK) // Twitter. February 27, 2022. URL: https://twitter.com/AlanRMacLeod/status/1497981855764824065 (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[17] On March 21, 2022, the Tverskoy District Court of Moscow satisfied a lawsuit filed by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation and recognized the activity of the social network Facebook and Instagram, owned by Meta, as extremist, banning its operation in Russia.

[18] The Daily Telegraph // Twitter. February 27, 2022. URL: https://twitter.com/AlanRMacLeod/status/149797934038199 0912 (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[19] Bulgaria Takes First Steps to Welcome Those Fleeing Ukraine // European Commission. March 10, 2022. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/bulgaria-takes-first-steps-welcome-those-fleeing-ukraine_en (accessed: 28.07.2022).

[20] Makura M. Media Coverage of Ukraine Shows It's Time to Rethink What We Know about Africa // CNN. March 4, 2022. URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/03/opinions/racist-media-coverage-ukraine-africa-makura-lgs-intl/index.html (accessed: 28.07.2022).

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strong emotional accent in the media texts, during the migration crisis of 2015—2016 and helped to build empathy to migrants. In 2022, this was not required, since the fact that the refugees were white was supposed to evoke sympathy. However, we are clearly not inclined to throw accusations of primitive racism on the authors of individual statements. We see them only as symptomatic of a discursive construction of "a migrant" and "a refugee" as objects of knowledge in which skin color can play the role of a social or political marker.

Indeed, in the recent academic literature, the issues of color, more precisely whiteness and its perception, have once again begun to receive significant attention. Several works on modern empirical material show how postcolonial discourses are combined with modern migration practices. Thus, in an article on the immigration of Icelanders to Norway, it is argued that the term migrant acquires a racial character in the everyday sense, as people whose origin points to the "Third World" are perceived as having other values (Guðjónsdóttir & Loftsdóttir, 2017, p. 800). This observation brings us back to E. Said and his most important book "Orientalism" (Said, 1994), in which he showed how the Eurocentric picture of the world constructed by white men was imprinted in language and culture and impacted if not defined social and political processes.

In the context of postcolonial theory, "whiteness" is described as a cultural-historical concept inherited by public discourse from the colonial period. Postcolonial theories reflect on the relevance of the issue of colour in today's world (Gilroy, 1993; 2000). Discussing social privilege and gender equality Nirwal Puwar claims that hidden privileges of a white person remain non-reflected. She notes that "whiteness" acts as an ontological denial (Puwar, 2004, p. 131). Barbara Samaluk, studying white migrants from Slovenia and Poland on the labor market in Britain, noted

that the very fact of the selection and admission of countries to the EU during its expansion can be considered a manifestation of the postcolonial mentality, since this process emphasized the privileges and special status of Europeanness, which, from the point of view of the researcher, were partially associated with the very "whiteness" for decision-makers in the European Union (Samaluk, 2014).

A number of studies have recently been published that "deconstruct" the category of "whiteness." This body of literature examines "whiteness" as a complex discursive object in which colour marks social, cultural and religious components. These works deconstruct the image of a highly skilled and privileged white person in the context of migration, treating the theme of "whiteness" as having intersectional character, with an emphasis on its social and cultural paradigms. A transnational perspective helps to highlight aspects of the discursive object that are normally shadowed. For example, in a study of white European migrants in Japan (Debnár, 2016), one can see how the transnational context, namely the fact that the white minority is located in a highly developed non-Western country, challenges the perceived notions of "whiteness" as a predicate of civilization, success, and hence the privileges associated with the "status of a white man."

At the same time, there have been studies showing that white migrants themselves act as objects of the racial discourse of the host society but at the same time they actively use racial categories in their own definition of the "Other." For example, Daria Krivonos, studying young migrants of post-Soviet origin in Finland, concluded that Russian-speaking young people in Finland are positioned as "others" from a racial point of view in the host country, while they themselves use racial discourse in relation to non-white "others" (Krivonos, 2018, p. 1145).

Research conducted on several national groups of migrants shows that the concept of

"whiteness" can be constructed by migrants to achieve a symbolic belonging to both the country of origin and the host society, to avoid or reduce real or perceived discrimination against them. Thus, John Fox, Laura Moroşanu and Esther Szilassy note that Eastern Europeans refer to and emphasize their phenotypic belonging to white Europeans and their cultural "belonging" to some European past which allows them psychologically to fight discrimination and defend their claims to a higher status (Fox, Moroşanu & Szilassy, 2015, p. 731). Thus, the above references to white, blue-eyed, and fair-haired refugees shall not be examined in a simplified manner as atavisms of racism (although, of course, it should be condemned as such), but as the result of the existence of a certain discursive object, let's call it Europeanness, which has a significant impact on the perception of migrants, and hence on migration policy on an international scale.

In the journalists' statements cited earlier in the article, the idea of "similarity" plays an important role, that is, refugees are evaluated as potential members of their own or someone else's group. We see that in creating this collective "we," journalists rely on a certain belonging to Europe, i.e. Europeanness (Morgunova, 2010, pp. 129—141), which is sometimes (but not always) described in geographical terms (location in the European part of Eurasia). Moreover, even when broadcasting to a global audience, the cited journalists talk about "them" being similar to "us," that is, the journalists do not associate themselves with those whose life they describe and their locus of control is still in some European countries. Europeanness is described by references to Christianity, middle class markers, high education, and even the use of familiar digital services. The vision of "rightful belonging to Europe" does not emerge as a result of in-depth interviews or from any empirical studies of integration and loyalties. Europeanness is assessed "at a glance," e.g. is based on appearances or phenotypes.

Thus, we see that the idea of Europeanness is described here in the same way the colonial bourgeois elites did it some 100 years ago and earlier. "Europeanness" is understood as being socially and culturally "civilized" and is juxtaposed to "nations of remote countries." It is also important to note that, speaking of the "similarity" of refugees, none of the speakers mentions any particular country or nation of the European Union. In the aforementioned quotes, refugees from distant and poor countries act as a collective "other," one that the authors of the quotations do not sympathize with. This "other" is simply non-European and names of these "other" countries are given "for example." Such obscure description of "Europeanness" strengthens the argument that public discourse creates the notion as an object of knowledge and normalizes it.

As a result, the discourse of Europeanness creates the effect of "normalizing" the image of a refugee as coming from another continent, from only poor, underdeveloped countries, and as being a representative of indigenous ethnic groups of these countries. Therefore, it becomes "normal" to observe struggles and sufferings of refugees. Such prescriptive perceptions of refugees being the "others" contradict both the values that are proclaimed today by any democratic society and the European Union, in particular. They also compromise the asylum system itself, which, as it becomes obvious, needs to be reformed.

Evolution of the Asylum System from Granting Asylum to Belgian Refugees in 1914 to the Belarusian-Polish "Standing" in 2021

Prior to the adoption of international agreements such as the Refugee Convention 1951 and the 1967 Protocol,[21] international asylum existed de facto in the form of two

[21] Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees // United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2010. URL: https://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf (accessed: 28.07.2022).

models. Individuals moved to another country because of personal or political contradictions between a person and a state. This was for the earliest form of international refuge. In the 19th century it was so widespread that some researchers call this century the "age of voluntary exile" (Aprile, 2010).

The second model describes mass displacement. History had seen such attempts to find refuge in another country during wars, religious persecution, and epidemics and represented either a permanent, life-changing displacement or a temporary resettlement. The best-known example of a state-sponsored temporary asylum was the resettlement of 250,000 Belgians to Britain during the World War I on the basis of a special bilateral agreement. This experience is of academic interest and has suddenly become relevant again in the 21st century.[22]

However, in general, in the first half of the 20th century Europe was more of a continent of emigration than immigration. When the modern political and legal concept of international asylum was under construction during the period of decolonization and the Cold War, it took into account two already existing models of asylum and reflected the realities of that time.

When the UN established the UNHCR in 1950, the refugee problem seemed to be temporary, and the agency itself was created as a temporary body to "solve the refugee problem" in a few years. His staff consisted of 34 people with an annual budget of USD 300,000. However, by 2019, UNHCR had 16,803 staff members located in 134 countries and an agency budget of USD 8.6 billion (Loescher, 2021, pp. 22—41). Later development of the UNHCR is associated with the emergence of new realities in the middle of the 20th century: the creation of welfare states in Europe and a growing competition for public resources as well as the affordability of international transport and proliferation of global Mass Media (Morgunova & Belogrud, 2018).

The number of asylum applications in European countries was slowly growing. During the period of decolonization, multiple national conflicts and the demarcation of the borders of former colonies (for example, in India — Pakistan, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Indonesia, Angola), made victims of conflicts in former colonies sought refuge in neighboring countries or became internally displaced persons, still only a few made it to European countries. The practice of granting asylum in European countries was focused primarily on individual cases of refugees from totalitarian regimes or political activists of an anti-communist spectrum (the politicization of asylum was already mentioned at the beginning of the article). There were few notable exceptions such as the case of evacuation by sea of 40,000 refugees from the war zone from Vietnam in 1978, organized by the West Germany.[23]

Since the 1980s, this situation has been changing: the number of asylum applications has been steadily growing over the following decades. It should be noted, however, that in European countries refugees accounted for less than 1% of migrants during this period.[24] However, in the population's psyche, asylum-seekers were not separated from migrant workers who, during the industrial boom of postwar reconstruction, were invited to work by national governments. Therefore, with the onset of industrial decline and the achievement

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[22] How to Research Belgian Refugees in Britain During the First World War: A Guidance Booklet From 'Tracing the Belgian Refugees' // University of Leeds. December 14, 2018. URL: https://belgianrefugees.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/02/rais-5.pdf (accessed: 28.07.2022).

[23] Bierbach M. A Brief History of Refugees Who Escaped to Germany // InfoMigrants. April 4, 2018. URL: https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/8463/a-brief-history-of-refugees-who-escaped-to-germany (accessed: 28.07.2022).

[24] Calculated by the authors using data per EU country from Macrotrends. URL: https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/ranking/refugee-statistics (accessed: 24.11.2022).

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of a significant number of visitors to Europe, refugees, like migrants, became the object of criticism and were sometimes subjected to violence.

And although 40 years later, according to UNHCR data for 2021, 83% of all refugees in the world are still hosted outside of Europe in low- and middle-income countries, and 72% in refugee neighboring countries,[25] asylum in EU countries today plays without exaggeration a huge role in the political agendas of this regional union and in international relations in general.

The values enshrined in international documents are supported by the majority of the population of European countries (and these values include equal rights of refugees and citizens of the country estates, social benefits, hearing in courts, education, as well as family reunification, as listed in the 1951 Convention). But the practice of granting asylum is constantly criticized both by the population and in academic works. Some talk about the term "refugee" being interpreted too broadly, other about a very lengthy process of reviewing applications and the consequences of keeping people in camps or their compact settlement, which hinders integration, while some are unhappy of allegedly heavy financial burden and the impact on social system. Of course, all of these considerations including competition for resources in a welfare state and political factors — contribute to the criticism, but one cannot ignore the role of ethno-racial and religious markers in the discourse.

They were most evident in the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border. In 2021, thousands of people claiming the right to asylum tried to enter the European Union via Lithuania, Latvia and Poland from neighbouring Belarus. The situation at the borders became critical during the winter months, when hundreds of people were exposed to freezing temperatures for weeks at a time. At least 24 people died while trying to cross the border from Belarus to the EU in 2021 and early 2022.[26] According to the Polish border guards, as early as April 2022, there were 977 attempts to cross the border, and since the beginning of 2022, almost 4,280.[27] However, this is significantly less than in November 2021, when in just a few days, from 3 to 4 thousand migrants from Yemen, Syria, and Iraq gathered along the border, including families with children.[28]

The most (in)famous were the incidents on the Polish border, where the Polish border guards repeatedly caught the applicants and pushed them into the territory of Belarus, often with the use of violence.[29] Limited access for observers and humanitarian organizations further aggravated the situation. In January 2022, Polish contractors began the construction of a new 353 million euro wall, 5.5 meters high and 186 km long, along the border with Belarus,[30] aimed at deterring potential asylum seekers from crossing the border.

Several important points need to be made here. Despite the violations of the rules regarding the treatment of asylum seekers were noted by all observers, a number of officials still voiced support for Poland's actions. The discourses of securitization and protection of the borders of the European Union were

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[25] Figures at a Glance // UNHCR. 2021. URL: https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html (accessed: 24.11.2022).

[26] Out of Sight — Refugees and Migrants at the Belarus — Poland Border // Jesuit Refugee Service. June 1, 2022. URL: https://www.grupagranica.pl/files/ Grupa-Granica-Report-Humanitarian-crisis-at-the-Polish-Belarusian-border.pdf (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Humanitarian Crisis at the Polish-Belarusian Border // Grupa Granica. December 10, 2021. URL: https://www.grupagranica.pl/files/Grupa-Granica-Report-Humanitarian-crisis-at-the-Polish-Belarusian-border.pdf (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[30] Poland Begins Work on $400m Belarus Border Wall Against Refugees // Al Jazeera. January 25, 2022. URL: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/25/poland-begins-work-on-400m-belarus-border-wall-against-migrants (accessed: 27.07.2022).

actively used in media coverage too. Thus, German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer thanked Poland for "protecting" the EU's eastern border against the backdrop of a continuing influx of people from the Middle East, Asia and Africa trying to cross the border from Belarus. In a letter to Polish Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski, H. Seehofer wrote that he "would like to thank" his Polish colleague and the Poland's border guard for "protecting our common external border."[31]

Asylum-seekers represented in this discourse as a depersonalized and dehumanized human mass, which can "gush" into the European Union.[32] If in 2015 the media called all those who crossed state borders "refugees," in 2021 we see almost exclusively "migrants" who want to illegally cross the border. Migrants are presented in official speeches as (inanimate) "hybrid weapons" manipulated by political forces. For example, European Council President Charles Michel said in Warsaw: "We are facing a hybrid, brutal, violent and unworthy attack, and we can only reply to this with firmness and unity, in accordance with our core values."[33]

Pushing out to prevent an asylum application has become the "norm" in the EU border area. The situation that happened on the border of Poland and Belarus is also a frequent occurrence on the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.[34] Similar

incidents occur in the Aegean Sea, where Greek Coast Guard vessels intercept boats with migrants.[35] In 2012, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Italy violated human rights by returning mainly asylum seekers from African countries to countries of origin or transit without processing their applications.[36] At the same time, Article 19 of the EU Charter on Human Rights prohibits collective expulsions,[37] and Article 4 of the Directive on common standards and procedures in EU Member States for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals[38] confirms the right to non-refoulement. Thus, we see that the European Union "protected" itself from refugees, violating both its legal norms and value orientations, protecting the "fortress of Europe" from "non-Europeans."

Although the racial differences between "Europeans" and "aliens" in the description of the Polish-Belarusian "standing" were not articulated in the media discourse, the refugees were described as migrants from specific countries from outside Europe, which, just like in the discourse of 2022, was a predicate to "other." People suffering from the cold weather did not evoke sympathy from either officials or the press. Hungarian Prime

[31] Germany Thanks Poland for "Protecting EU Border" Amid Migrant Surge // Notes from Poland. October 20, 2021. URL: https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/10/20/germany-thanks-poland-for-protecting-eu-border-amid-migrant-surge (accessed: 27.07.2022).
[32] Polish MP: 'For Me, Multiculturalism Is Not a Value' // Al Jazeera. November 9, 2019. URL: https://youtu.be/ccOp0I8ZPho (accessed: 27.07.2022).
[33] EU Accuses Belarus of 'Trafficking' Migrants toward Border // Hürriyet Daily News. November 11, 2021. URL: https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/eu-accuses-belarus-of-trafficking-migrants-toward-border-169285 (accessed: 27.07.2022).
[34] Croatia: Anti-Torture Committee Publishes Report on 2020 Ad Hoc Visit // Council of Europe. December 3, 2021. URL: https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/croatia-

anti-torture-committee-publishes-report-on-2020-ad-hoc-visit (accessed: 27.07.2022).
[35] Greek Coast Guard 'Fires Shots' at Refugee Boat // Hürriyet Daily News. March 3, 2020. URL: https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-coast-guard-fires-shots-at-refugee-boat-152593 (accessed: 27.07.2022).
[36] Italy: 'Historic' European Court Judgment Upholds Migrants' Rights // Amnesty International. February 23, 2012. URL: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2012/02/italy-historic-european-court-judgment-upholds-migrants-rights/ (accessed: 27.07.2022).
[37] Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union // EUR-Lex. October 26, 2012. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT (accessed: 27.07.2022).
[38] Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on Common Standards and Procedures in Member States for Returning Illegally Staying Third-Country Nationals // EUR-Lex. December 24, 2008. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A32008L0115 (accessed: 27.07.2022).

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Minister Viktor Orban, speaking at the Romanian University in Baile Tusnad, was very clear about the difference in attitudes toward European and non-European refugees: "We [Hungarians] are not a mixed race, and we do not want to become a mixed race either."[39]

Another striking example, as noted above, of the role of ethnicity and race in granting asylum is the EU Decision on the Temporary Protection of Refugees from Ukraine of March 4, 2022, which granted them residence permits of 1 to 3 years and the right to work,[40] while over 1 million refugees affected by hostilities in parts of the Middle East and North Africa in 2014—2016 had no such rights. They were not allowed to work until their asylum application had been approved. Moreover, they had to apply for asylum and wait for approval before looking for work. Since having to wait another year for an asylum decision reduces the likelihood of employment by around 4.9% due to "skill atrophy" and demoralization, it is more difficult for "non-European" refugees to integrate into the European labor force.[41]

Instead, EU migration and asylum policies became increasingly restrictive as more and more countries and political parties refused to provide protection to asylum seekers.

Since 2015, EU institutions and member states have funded programs for return, readmission and addressing the root causes of migration in countries of origin or transit countries (Bisson, 2018, pp. 21—25), ignoring the human rights concerns of refugees in camps in Greece, as well as at the external borders of the EU[42] and strengthened migration controls. According to the European Parliamentary Research Service, between 2014 and 2022 the total length of border fences at the external borders of the EU and within the EU/Schengen area increased from 315 km to 2048 km.[43]

In its report on racism and discrimination against migrants of 2015—2016, the European Network Against Racism emphasizes that African migrants in need of humanitarian protection were presented as "economic" or "illegal" migrants, with no attempt made to give political an assessment of the stimulus and disincentive factors pushing migrants to leave their home countries.[44]

"The Fortress of Europe" in a Postcolonial Context

European Union border crossings by asylum seekers in 2021—2022 show a clear division between "us" and "them" both in terms of practical decisions taken at the border check-points and in terms of verbal statements. R. Wodak noted that the separation of "us" from "them" emerges when a "national body" is created and important for formulating of the idea of a national future. In the framework of DHA, "language itself does not have power and authority, but acquires them due to the fact

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[39] Orbán: "Hungarians Are Not a Mixed Race and Do Not Want to Become One" // DailyNewsHungary. July 23, 2022. URL: https://dailynewshungary.com/orban-hungarians-are-not-a-mixed-race-and-does-not-want-to-become-one/ (accessed: 27.07.2022).

[40] Temporary Protection // European Commission. 2022. URL: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en (accessed: 30.07.2022).

[41] Esposito A. The Limitations of Humanity: Differential Refugee Treatment in the EU // Harvard International Review. September 14, 2022. URL: https://hir.harvard.edu/the-limitations-of-humanity-differential-refugee-treatment-in-the-eu/ (accessed: 19.11.2022).

[42] Libya Fails to Stop Migrant Detention Abuses, As EU-Backed Returns Soar // The New Humanitarian. June 24, 2021. URL: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/6/24/libya-fails-to-stop-migrant-detention-abuses-as-eu-backed-returns-soar (accessed: 19.11.2022).

[43] Walls and Fences at EU Borders // European Parliamentary Research Service. October 2022. URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733692/EPRS_BRI(2022)733692_EN.pdf (accessed: 19.11.2022).

[44] ENAR Shadow Report 2015—2016 "Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe" // European Commission. March 31, 2017. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/racism-and-discrimination-context-migration-europe_en (accessed: 19.11.2022).

that it is used by people with power" (Wodak, 2009, p. 35). Created by public texts, discursive objects are "normalized" and become some kind of obvious knowledge, i.e. objects of discourse, and therefore do not seem to require further explanation, but on the contrary, they can be used to explain new realities. This is precisely the process we face today when we talk about "Europeanness," which has become an important part of the identity in the European Union and a dividing line between one and the other refugees.

Undoubtedly, the creation of the supranational body of the European Union is based on a geographical representation of Europe. However, not all European territory is part of this union, and the differences between different parts of Europe are very large. Thus, Europeanness can be imagined as a kind of cultural and historical text that is relevant to a given territory (Ostrowski, 2021), but at the moment, from the point of view of the European Union, as the examples show, only "native Europeans" have the right to it.

If we try to formulate the discourse of Europeanness in a historical perspective, then we will not be able to ignore the link of European population to the colonial past. Homi Bhabha notes that the colonialism that arose during the Enlightenment was associated with attempts to achieve greater economic efficiency, but its humanitarian consequences are widely known today (Morgunova, 2020). The political changes associated with decolonization coincided with globalised mass migration, which by the end of the 20th century has become truly global. Some researchers talk about the turbulent nature of postcolonial migrations, but it is clear that the mass migrations of today are generated by well-defined political processes and stimulated by global economic imbalances.

While the former metropolises, known to be concentrated in the west of the European continent, were building welfare states in the second half of the 20th century, the liberated

countries had to fight with chronic poverty problems and solve developmental and national identity dilemmas. International migration, by increasing contacts between representatives of different societies, only emphasized the existing contrast. Thus, although it seems paradoxical, the collapse of the colonial system contributed to the growth of the status of "Europeanness," that is, everything that was associated with Europe (McCormick, 2010). However, the opening of borders for trade and investment was accompanied by increased measures to prevent and police migration. An attempt to create a "fortress of Europe," to protect (literally[45]) it from "alien invasion," revives colonial thinking at a new stage.

Conclusion

The reviewed asylum practices show how the discursive markers "civilized" — "uncivilized" and "European" — "non-European" project what Edward Said noted in 1978 as the perceived superiority of the West over Eastern cultures and call into question one of the understandings Europeanness — namely, that Europe is the embodiment of advanced political ethics (Biebuyck, 2011, pp. 314—316). The European public discourse of the last decade has imagined an image of a refugee from the Middle East and North Africa as an "other," as somebody, "naturally" existed in an environment of instability and poverty in the "uncivilized" parts of the world. Current discursive asylum practices in the European Union exclude and stigmatize non-white, non-Christian refugees as non-Europeans.

In the 20th century, ideas about Europeanness have undergone major transformations. However, no systematic study of the whole range of conceptual meanings of

[45] Ahmed K., Tondo L. Fortress Europe: The Millions Spent on Military-Grade Tech to Deter Refugees // The Guardian. December 6, 2021. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/dec/06/fortress-europe-the-millions-spent-on-military-grade-tech-to-deter-refugees (accessed: 27.07.2022).

this discursive object has been carried out so far. Europeanness is either interpreted as a set of desired social ideals and values, or, reductively, as a quality associated exclusively with European institutions in their current form. Both interfere with the postcolonial debate about the nature of "Europe" and "Europeanness" in the postcolonial world.

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