

A Review of: “Why Europe Intervenes in Africa? Security, Prestige, and the Legacy of Colonialism” by Catherine Gegout¹

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The intervention of European and other forces in Africa is a very actual and interesting topic in the light of the latest developments in the region. The migration trends since 2015 and the recent terrorism activities in the Sahel region makes it difficult to disregard the importance of what connections exist between the two areas, which is actually a common zone called the Mediterranean. The present book by Catherine Gegout endeavours to analyse the historical past and the contemporary issues concerning the two territories, to what extent have their relationships changed and why does Europe still feel the need to intervene in the affairs of Africa. The work relies on various sources from primary and secondary documents to interviews as well. Overall, it is an interesting book to read not only for those who are researchers of the topic, but for the average reader as well who wants to know better the intents of the European countries and organizations towards the southern continent.

After a short introduction, the book consists of 7 chapters, which are arranged in an orderly fashion built up to systematically comprehend the themes about the interventions in Africa by Europe. In the beginning pages, the author lays down the goals of the book – the explanation of the concept of conflict, the interpretation of the types of interventions by Europe in Africa and the complementary view about the other global powers (UN, China, USA) which can contribute to the situation of the African countries. The book aims as well to collect the European interests that can influence the security relations between Europe and Africa and it enumerates the interventions starting from the 1980's. Gegout uses an effective methodology in separating four causes for which European states would consider interfering in an African country's affairs. These four principles are: core/security realism, economic realism, normative/prestige realism and humanitarian realism.

In the first chapter, the writer elaborates the abovementioned four categories, after she enumerates the types of interventions that is possible to imagine. First of all, according to her, it can be either direct or indirect, and also there are several types of interferences that are important to understand: economic, political, cultural, institutional, legal, medical or environmental as well. After explaining these phenomena, the four basic norms for intervention are coming into focus. Core realism is important for the security and political interest of the European countries, economic realism comes into mind concerning trade and

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monetary interests, normative realism is the basis of the prestige of a leader or a country while ethical or humanitarian realism is a supportive principle, which is to help the given African country by aid or other methods. At the end of the chapter, Gegout stresses the importance of the post-colonialism, which is still present in the mind of the greater powers: basically it is the memory of the former colonial power which made the European great powers in their own eyes superior to their African counterparts.

The second chapter gives a summary of the conflicts from the 1980's up until now. It enumerates the Romans, then the European medieval conquerers who started to exploit the riches of the African continent. She mentions the slave trade, the famous explorers like Stanley, Livingstone, Mungo Park, etc. Gegout finally arrives at the time of the 'scramble for Africa', when every great power in Europe was trying to carve out a piece for itself from the continent. In the following pages, the Berlin Conference (1884-5) is discussed, where the French, English, Spanish, Italians, Belgians and Germans split up Africa among themselves. The European countries of that time felt superior to the Africans, economically and elsewhere. We become aware that they had a strong messianistic civilizing urge, and they wanted to evangelize the animist African tribes. Gegout calls this attitude towards the Africans in modern times Eurocentrism. However, from the 1930's, independence movements started to appear, and from the 1950's African countries started to become independent. The two greatest powers, the French and the British left the scene differently: the French insisted more on their territories, while the British left more easily. Nevertheless, even after the independence of the African countries, the two powers wanted to hold onto their previous influence. Then another phenomenon became obvious: during the Cold War, the African countries became the center of the proxy wars of the USA and the USSR, who supported opposing civil war parties on the disturbed continent.

After describing the historical background of the conflicts on Africa, the book turns to the African countries participating in the contest and the global actors who wanted to exploit the black continent: namely China and the USA. The chapter first and foremost takes into consideration the African states and their efforts to organize themselves against the great powers in the world who tried to take advantage of them. The Africans also created their respective institutions: for example, the ECOWAS (1975), which is a regional security organization, consisting of 3000 soldiers. Then there is the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which was active in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998. One of the most important is the African Union established in July 2002, which represents the interests of the African countries. It has a special relationship with the EU and the UN and has developed considerable diplomatic ties with other states and organizations. It relies on the ECOWAS and the SADC for example in the time of need for assistance in peacekeeping. It participates in healing the wounds of the conflict-ridden areas in Africa. It is interesting to know that the UN is also present in the area from the 1980's on. It has participated in several peacekeeping operations such as in Western Sahara – MINURSO (1991-) or Rwanda – UNAMIR (1993-6). The chapter describes the influence of China as well on the continent. China is

interested in Africa since the Badung Conference of 1955, and it is now the second biggest trading partner of Africa after the EU, and it exports twice as much as the USA to the black continent. According to Gegout, the large country has four security policy principles to follow: it participates in UN missions, it creates bilateral cooperations with African states, it has established a military base in Djibouti in 2016, and it takes part in the arms trade with the African states. Lastly, the chapter treats the influence of the USA in Africa. The main goal of the superpower is to ensure its security goals. After 9/11, its main concern became terrorism and it is fighting it since then. For example, it created the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which supports the fight against terrorism in the Sub-Saharan region. It took part in some of the missions in Africa, but after Somalia in 1992/3 (Operation Restore Hope) including 28000 soldiers, it usually rarely takes part in operations in Africa. Exceptions are for example Libya, against which it took part in the international coalition against Colonel Gaddafi in 2011, and the USA helped Chad as well. The main role of the USA is thus is to fight against terrorism but intervene only on a low scale.

The fourth chapter discusses the effect of France in Africa. The French have several ties to the continent even after their independence. The most important for them is the security issue and the prestige motive of the four principles listed by the author. *Françafrique* is a term familiar to the French up until now, and it means the systematic exploitation of the past colonies by the European great power. The French have to defend their citizens in the respective African countries as well, where they can be found in the ten thousands as citizens of those states. The African former colonies' economy is of great relevance to the French, because some of them are still using the CFA franc system, which makes them dependent on each other. The diplomatic and cultural ties are still ongoing, so the African states have special relations with their French counterparts. France has a lot of military bases, training missions, defence contracts at the scene, so they seem close to their African partners and vice versa. In 1993, there were 13000 French soldiers in Africa, in 2017 there were 9000, which is a considerable number. France is also fighting against terrorism, just like the USA. It has intervened in lot of places, for example several times in the Central African Republic, and also in Ivory Coast. This was a turning point in the reaction of the French forces: after the 2004 bombing of French soldiers, it is reluctant to intervene unilaterally, and it prefers multilateral action concerning peacekeeping missions in Africa. Another example was in Mali, when in 2012 France interfered to stop the jihadist movement in the country – they deployed 4000 soldiers. Of the four principle, core, economic and normative realism is applicable to France, and if it doesn't collide with the first three, humanitarian action is also possible, but it comes last.

The fifth chapter talks about the role of the United Kingdom in Africa. Its role is somewhat different of that of the French. The British don't concern themselves with economic interests, they are more affected by the prestige they gain by intervening in Africa. They rarely enter in a conflict, and one of the only mission they participated in was the one in Libya in 2011. It is characteristic, that they only interfere somewhere if the USA needs support. They prefer



staying out of the way, but they also fight against terrorism. One of the few examples of their intervention was in Sierra Leone, where first they supported President Ahmad Kabbah, then they left him, only to restore the relationship soon after with Kabbah (1997-2000). Zimbabwe is interesting for them because of their colonial history there, but they didn't interfere in that conflict as well. In summary, the British prefer the status quo and they only intervene when they fight terrorism, thus the UK could be called a non-interventionalist power.

The sixth chapter describes the role of the European Union in Africa and its interventionist policies. The EU mainly avoids interfering with the African states' conflicts, but it usually takes part in training missions, which help the given country's army. To cite examples: EUTM Mali (2013), Operation Artemis in the Republic of the Congo, or we can mention the AMIS mission in Darfur. Since 2015, one of the EU's main goals became the fight against migration. The EU willingly turns to the tools of diplomacy instead of military solutions. Its main concerns are security and acquiring prestige. By that, it not only increases its own reputation, but it proves itself in front of the NATO and the United States as well.

Lastly, Gegout turns to the future, what fate is there for Africa and the EU? She concludes, that the African states will need furthermore the help of their European counterparts, but they will become stronger as time passes. She expresses her hope that the humanitarian aspect of the conflict handling will improve, and thus Africa will be a better place to live in. The author prospects that the European nations will want to handle their conflict management without the European Union, maybe via NATO. However, Donald Trump's protectionist politics and the Brexit would weaken this approach. Gegout thinks that the interventions will not falter, but instead, they will go on continuously, and the Europeans' main goal will be the fight against terrorism. She expresses her hope that with time passing by, the humanitarian approach to the interventionist politics will be embraced.

To conclude, I would like to add that Catherine Gegout summarized the different problematics of the European intervention in Africa very thoroughly, and with the help of sufficient sources she was able to comprehend the essence of the conflicts and interventions between the two sides. Maybe with the help of this book, the interference of the European powers and their African counterparts will become more sophisticated, and thus the dialogue between the two sides can be brought closer to each other.