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### Borders, above all?

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In her analyses of migration and deportation flows between Libya and Italy, Rutvica Andrijasevic (2009, 2010) has argued that although it might be tempting to simply see this policy as part of a broader externalisation and 'out-sourcing' of EU border management, it would be more accurate to understand the Italian 'push-back' arrangements as 'a retraction of the right of asylum rather than its externalisation'. In the Libyan case, she suggests, we are dealing with something entirely different. Here, it is no longer the case (as for various 'partners' in the Eastern Neighbourhood, such as Moldova or the Ukraine) of the EU 'teaching' proper techniques and technologies of migration management and conducting border control 'at a distance'. Rather, we are dealing with the complete suspension of presumed common European norms and standards, with a single Member State creating policy in autonomous fashion (albeit presumably on behalf of 'EU'rope).

The most recent events have thrown this question into even starker relief in two distinct ways that are important for political geographers to consider. The first regards the question of common European values and norms and, in particular, the geopolitical representation of 'EU'rope as a 'force for good' in the world, whose internal values presumably drive its external conduct as well. As the Libyan 'revolution' began to turn increasingly violent, media attention focussed first on the efforts of various European states to 'get their people out', and subsequently on the tens of thousands of Egyptian and other 'guest workers' fleeing Libya through the Tunisian border. The fate of the hundreds of thousands of Libya's 'illegal' migrants remained invisible. And yet they were suddenly, tragically, rendered all-too-visible by the events unfolding: various migrant associations raised cries of alarm that refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa, many already in conditions of extreme duress, had now also become the target of the hunt for 'black mercenaries', as rumours circulated that Gaddafi was employing mercenaries from Chad and Niger to carry out the most brutal attacks (Al Jazeera, 2011).

Developing on Judith Butler's work on grievable and non-grievable lives, Maja Zehfuss (2009) writes about what she terms 'hierarchies of grief' and I believe the expression is useful in the current context as well. Rather than providing an opportunity for the EU to affirm itself as a 'normative' power, in a 'Neighbourhood' that has long been a privileged space of EU action, the events in Libya tragically confirmed the 'apartheid' of the border regime implemented by certain Member States and noted by van Houtum (2010) and others, with a clear hierarchy, a clear calculus of who was to be saved from Gaddafi's violence – and who was to be feared.

The second point regards the viability of a common EU approach to border and migration management that simply fell apart when faced with the arrival on European shores of 25,000 (mostly) young North African men. Just as the European Commission was calling for a new 'Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean' (2011a), highlighting especially the need for new 'mobility partnerships' with the states of the southern shore, Italy and France requested a temporary suspension of the Schengen agreement, repopulating their border posts along the Ventimiglia frontier in order to limit the massive influx of newly arrived migrants into France. The Franco-Italian move was quickly followed by Denmark which decided to reinstate random customs checks at its borders with Sweden and Germany. Although the European Commission quickly condemned such unilateral attempts to 're-nationalise' Schengen, an important breach had been opened.

The most recent literature on the evolving model of European 'border-work' has suggested that EU border control increasingly is

envisioned as a 'problem of management', often deployed at a distance. Many excellent critical analyses have focussed, for example, on the constitutive role of technical norms, standards and regulations and 'particular ethicalized stylings of government' such as 'the partnership' and 'the dialogue' (see Andrijasevic & Walters, 2010; Levy 2011), also noting how such (geo)political technologies serve to extend 'EU'rope's influence into its various 'Neighbourhoods'. It is surprising, then, how easily such selective and 'scientific' management of mobility can collapse into simple closure, and how quickly attempts to elaborate a common – and humane – EU migration policy fall hostage to national fears. This has enormous implications for the future of the European project. As John Agnew (2008: 185) noted a few years back, 'the map image of the borders of the state still exercises a major influence on the territorial imagination of whose security is at stake – and who most threatens it'. For all the arguments regarding the de-bordering of 'EU'rope's borders (and their increasingly 'technical' nature), when push comes to shove, reclaiming hard national control over hard national borders still plays best to home audiences.

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