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FORCE MULTIPLIERS
The Instrumentalities of Imperialism

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The New Imperialism, Volume 5

Edited by
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Cover design: Maximilian C. Forte

Printed in Canada

FORCED MIGRATIONS:
AN ECHO OF THE STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE OF
THE NEW IMPERIALISM

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The past three decades have been characterized by a "new" form of domination in the world. It is a form of political, economic and social domination, one that might be more subtle but equally or more destructive than colonialism. The new imperialism led by the US superpower is often conceptualized as a non-territorial empire. The US new imperialism understood as a global hegemonic power (Harvey, 2003) can rule from its own country without necessarily having a physical presence in the dominated territory, especially through various "force multipliers" (see the Introduction to this volume). Much of the scholarship on the new imperialism does indeed stress its non-territorial character, as one distinguishing it from the old colonial imperialism. On the other hand, the historical movement of US borders, through expansion (see Figure 5.1), calls into question this non-territoriality. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is still more complex. The spatial substitutes for the territorial, especially around borders. Trouillot thus spoke of borders, "of the space between centralized governments with national territorial claims, where encounters between individuals and state power are most visible" (2001, p. 125), while Scott (1998) pointed to the ways in which a state enforces its power through the placement of people and control over their movement. Here I am concerned with the "spatialization effect" of an imperial state, with the production of boundaries and jurisdiction (Trouilot, 2001, p. 126). At present, with campaigning US politicians calling for the building of a wall along the US border with Mexico, or Hungary frantically trying to complete a fence to keep out refugees,

we should be reminded of the extent to which "the protection of borders becomes an easy political fiction with which to enlist support from a confused citizenry" (Trouillot, 2001, p. 133).

Even though the new imperialism guided by the US demonstrates its capacity to rule from a distance, this protagonist also has a military presence in 156 countries, with more than 700 military installations (including full bases) in at least 63 countries (Dufour, 2007/7/1). The new imperialism has pushed through neoliberalism virtually worldwide, resulting in different degrees of social and economic violence. Integrated into neoliberal thinking is a tendency to cast the West as superior, breathing new life into ideas of white racial superiority that have entailed more violence directed against non-Westerners. Stemming from this, we see the extensive, historical militarization of the US border with Mexico and thus the rest of the Latin American land mass (see Figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4).

This chapter intends to demonstrate the different forms of structural violence caused by the new imperialism, with special attention paid to the forced migratory movement that exists in the contemporary world. In doing so, I rely on Harsha Walia's concept of "border imperialism" as a starting point. In *Undoing Border Imperialism*, Walia (2013) argues that Western imperialism is dispossessing communities in order to secure land and resources for state and capitalist interests in maximizing profits. Dispossessed persons often attempt to migrate to the same centres of power responsible for their dispossession. However, those people are often stopped at strongly protected borders. This movement is explained by different scholars as the "pull and push" phenomenon. Makaremi (2008) points out that those migratory movements are subject to political management built on a framework of exclusion, a framework that follows the outline of the division of the world between the global North and South, and is a system of political management that reaffirms the state's control over the movement of persons. In this chapter I will illustrate how, to borrow the words of David Bacon (2008, p. 2), "U.S. policies have both produced migration and criminalized migrants".

Figure 5.1: A Mobile US Border

General Winfield Scott is shown during the Mexican War, entering the Mexican capital. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 fixed the Mexican-American border at the Rio Grande and recognized the US annexation of Texas. The treaty also extended the boundaries of the US to the Pacific. This scene was painted by Filippo Constaggini in 1885, and is part of an official Architect of the Capitol photograph.

Figure 5.2: A History of Militarizing the US-Mexican Border, 1916
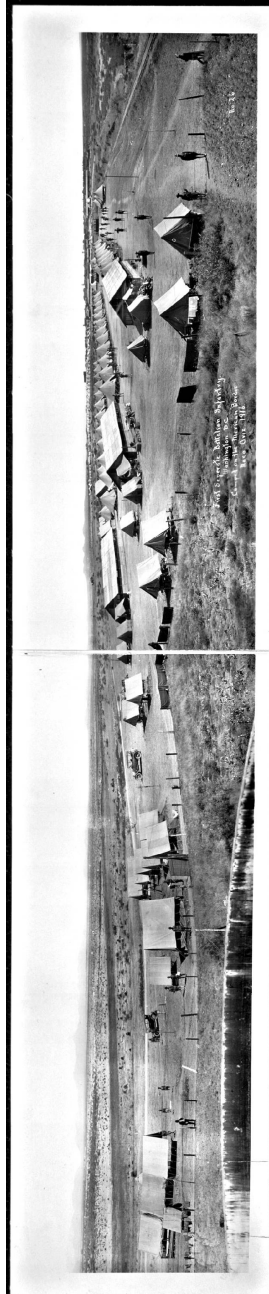
This photograph from 1916 shows the First Separate Battalion Infantry, camped on the Mexican border at Naco, Arizona. (Photo from the Library of Congress)

Figure 5.3: Militarizing the US-Mexican Border, 2015

US Border Patrol agents escort four undocumented immigrants captured near the US-Mexico border on April 23, 2015. A Mississippi Army National Guard LUH-72 Lakota helicopter helped locate the men beneath a tree along a mountainside near Nogales, Arizona. Six soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 185th Aviation Regiment of Tupelo, Mississippi, are assigned to Task Force Raven, which works with multiple federal agencies in patrolling the border. (Photo: Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes, Mississippi Army National Guard)

Figure 5.4: An Imperial Border

Shown here is a portion of the fence between the US and Mexico along the Pacific Ocean just south of San Diego—it was taken at what is in fact named "Imperial Beach" at "Border Field State Park". (Photo via Wikimedia Commons by Tony Webster)

Why Force Matters

"The essence of empire," Matthew Connelly (2006) maintains, "is not military force, but the exercise of untrammeled power" (p. 32). Michael Ignatieff, one of the leading ideological proponents of US dominance, also relegates military power to a lesser status when he wrote, "the 21st century imperium is a new invention in the annals of political science, an empire lite, a global hegemony whose grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known" (Ignatieff, 2003/1/5). Despite grace notes and abstract power, one cannot deny the rise of the US' "new empire," especially after the Cold War, as anything but an aggressive expansion of its presence in world affairs, achieving the position of an unrivalled military superpower. This force is a crucial element of the power from which the US benefits. As Gonzalez et al. (2004) argue, "in the geopolitical sphere, the most powerful of nations and unparalleled promoter of neoliberalism—the U.S.—constructed the most dominant and war-ready military machinery in history, all under the guidance of the highly centralized state" (p. xi). The US is using and pushing forward its military power to dominate, because it cannot rely primarily on its economic power due to its phenomenal level of indebtedness, the decline of domestic manufacturing, and persistent trade deficits, among other factors.

The US is one of the key actors causing as well as controlling the migratory phenomenon that results, amongst other things, from accumulation by dispossession. In addition, Gordon and Webber (2008, p. 65) argue that, "the creation of new spaces of accumulation is not an innocuous process; it inevitably involves the forceful and violent reorganization of peoples' lives as they are subordinated to the whims of capital". Those economic determinants and their repercussions are extremely important in understanding migratory movement.

Freedom of Capital versus Border Control

One can examine the contradiction between freedom of capital and the "unfreedom" of migrants. On the one hand, neoliberal states are seeking to create free trade agreements to push forward the opening of markets and privatization. On the other hand, talk of freedom and openness does not generally apply to people, apart

from the movement of executives and a select few technical specialists. After September 11, 2001, Canada and the US created the "smart border" accord in order to reaffirm that even if they would be increasing control of immigration, it would not affect the free flow of capital, goods and services across borders (Walia, 2013). States regulate immigration as much as they can but let some people cross their borders with legal or illegal status to satisfy particular interests. The example of seasonal workers with no permanent residency demonstrates a dynamic of differential inclusion and exclusion. Harvey (2003) explains the inside-outside dialectic of capitalism, arguing that capitalism necessarily and always needs something outside of itself, thus using a pre-existing "outside" or creating its own "other". Sharma (2005) argues that the neoliberal doctrine celebrates the mobility of capital and some bodies, while the bodies of others, in this case migrants, face ever growing restrictions and criminalization.

States, Neoliberalism, and Corporate Movement

Nowadays, the state and the neoliberal doctrine go hand in hand. The Canadian and US states are increasingly facilitating the institutionalization of neoliberal doctrine while reducing social programs as much as possible (Walia, 2013). There are too many examples to count that show that both states facilitate the movement and entrance of private corporations into others countries, and their own. Therefore, the Canadian state is legally backing private Canadian companies such as mining corporations, especially in Latin America but also elsewhere. To illustrate this argument, Kerr (2012/3/30) affirms that, "over 75% of the world's exploration and mining companies are headquartered in the country [Canada, and] in 2008, these 1293 companies had an interest in 7809 properties in over 100 countries around the world".

Security, Borders and Migration

Numerous scholars have discussed "globalization" in terms of an increasing flow of goods, capital, services and people (Piché, 2005; Bellier, 2009). However, those movements are not arbitrary but coordinated by the US among others. As mentioned above, the dispossession bred by the system is forcing people to migrate and simultaneously there is a strong regulation of the influx of migrants. It is an important issue for many countries especially the US as the fortification of borders seems to increase (Piché, 2005;

Walia, 2013), with the wall between the US and Mexico and the involvement of the US in the construction of the wall between Israel and Palestine being clear examples (see Figure 5.5). On November 9, 2014, the 25th anniversary of the fall of Berlin wall was celebrated; nonetheless, the world has never been as filled with the construction of walls dividing countries and so many restrictions on migrations. Sharma (2005) uses the powerful concept of global apartheid to describe the world's response towards migration. One can see a contradiction in official narratives about the West being open to migration. The US government and NGOs use a humanitarian discourse when speaking of untenable situations in other countries, using moral arguments to legitimize their intervention in those countries (Fassin, 2010). Yet this is part of what we might call a double discourse on the part of the US, which is supposedly very conscious about the lives of Others elsewhere, but not letting them in as immigrants into the US when such an option is needed. The US-led invasions and military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have created some of the world largest refugees communities (UN High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], 2011). Afghanistan, occupied by the US, was the top most producer of refugees in the world up to 2013, even 12 years after the start of the occupation, while Somalia, where the US indirectly intervenes (sometimes directly), being the third largest producer of refugees (UNHCR, 2013). Today, what some call a human tidal wave of refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, is overwhelming border control points from Greece to Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary, as tens of thousands make their way through the Balkans (see Smale, 2015/8/24). Nevertheless, the chief protagonist in producing the conditions for those mass displacements, the US, only accepted 328 Afghan people in 2009 (Walia, 2013, p. 42). In fact, it has been left up to developing countries to shoulder most of the burden, hosting 86% of the world's refugees, up from 70% a little over a decade ago (UNHCR, 2013). The mobility and the "illegal situation" of migrants is hard to capture in statistics but it still becomes apparent that the majority of refugees are not in those countries that promote the discourse of humanitarian aid and "helping others," but are to be found rather in countries such as Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon (UNHCR, 2013). Though the UNHCR presents the statistics that provide the pattern outlined here, the organization itself fails to ever really explain the causes of such displacements.

Figure 5.5: The US Army: Walling Off Mexico

US Army Specialist Michael J. Westall uses a motorized boom lift to get into posi-
tion to weld the reinforcement of the primary steel border fence along the US-
Mexico border, on June 7, 2007. Westall is attached to the 188th Engineer Com-
pany, North Dakota Army National Guard and assigned to Task Force Diamond-
back. Task Force Diamondback's mission is to erect and reinforce segments of the
border fence and the construction of obstacles to along the US-Mexico border.
(Photo: Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, US Air Force)

Migrant Detention in the US

As David Harvey put it, "military activity abroad requires military-
like discipline at home" (2003, p. 193). The Department of Home-
land Security detains 400,000 immigrants in over 250 facilities

across the US at an annual cost of more than $1.7 billion (Detention Watch Network [DWN], 2012). The world of detention systems is also a lucrative one, with increased privatization and the formation of a detention industry. Companies such as the Corrections Corporation of America [CCA] boast of having a capacity of 85,000 (CCA, 2013). The CCA represents another example of the "public-private partnership" scheme, heralded as a force multiplier (see the Introduction to the volume, and chapter 2).

September 11, 2001, was a crucial moment to reorganize, reaffirm and articulate a way to deal with what some politicians in the US have been calling one of the biggest national threats: illegal immigrants. In 2003, the immigration-control apparatus was reorganized, with what existed being replaced by three new agencies, under the Department of Homeland Security: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and Customs and Border Protection (Gavett, 2011/10/18). With this reorganization, "the line between criminal and civil enforcement of immigration issues becomes blurred" (Gavett, 2011/10/18). The landscape of immigration law has changed dramatically as the traditional boundaries between the criminal and immigration spheres have eroded (Frey & Zhao, 2011, p. 281). Others have also noted that since the late 1980s one can observe an increasing convergence between the criminal justice and immigration control systems (Kanstroom, 2004, p. 640). With the frequent cooperation from mass media and private groups, the anti-immigrant rhetoric has strengthened the pejorative construction of immigrants "illegals" and therefore "criminals". This group is thus perceived as a national threat (Frey & Zhao, 2011). The attempt to create deviants can be seen as a way to legitimize the exercise of US domination over migrants. This control relies upon "'geostrategic discourses' of external threat and internal safety" (Martin, 2011, p. 477). In addition, the reality facing migrants is of much more severe treatment by US border control agencies. Frey and Zhao (2011, p. 281) indicated that the US Congress, "increased the number of immigration-related criminal offenses as well as the severity of punishment, expanded the number of criminal offenses that require deportation, and delegated more immigration enforcement to state and local law enforcement officers". All non-citizens in the US are "subject to a complex, ever-changing, relatively insular, flexible, and highly discretionary legal regime called immigration law" (Kanstroom, 2004, p. 641). Detention centres are not an isolated practice but are part of a complex system of trying to efficiently block entry to undocumented migrants. Other strategies include sending trained

agents from the US and Canada abroad for interdiction purposed, stopping migrants even before they succeed in entering in those countries (Davidson, 2003, p.5). Makaremi (2008) argues that in Western countries, border control and the construction of detention centres and refugee camps are a testimony of the new distribution of power regulated by access to mobility.

Labor, Migration and New Imperialism

States control movements across borders by documented and undocumented migrants, in order to protect or advance certain interests. Among these interests are the will to secure a work force that can accept very precarious conditions that few Americans would accept, such as very low income without any social security. Walia (2013) argues that the state which admits migrants, in those conditions, therefore, "legalizes the trade in their bodies and labor by domestic capital" (p. 70). Furthermore, the precarious position of migrants can diminish their motivation to protest against employers since they do not have the necessary legal status or protections. In addition, their vulnerability can open them to different forms of abuse. Walia (2013) proposes that "the state denial of legal citizenship to these migrants ensures legal control over the disposability of the laborers, which in turn embeds the exploitability of their labor" (p. 70). In her analysis, migrants and seasonal workers are "the flip side of transnational capitalism" (Walia, 2013, p. 70). Refusal to grant legal status is also a way to maintain migrants in a position where they can be perpetually displaceable and therefore maintained in a "wandering" situation (Walia, 2013; Makaremi, 2008).

The imposition of structural adjustment policies, such as the reduction in employment in the public sector and the privatization of lands, has severely affected the lives of many around the world. Such policies, added to attacks on trade unions and labour legislation, are seen as having, "led to the massive conversion of workers into unemployed, underemployed, and low-paid self-employed street vendors and itinerant laborers" in the Latin American case (Petras, 2003, pp. 14–15). These radical changes, such as land privatization, mostly affect peasants and/or indigenous communities that already have a precarious situation and a hard time receiving recognition from States. Petras adds that many communities living in urban or rural areas affected by this system have been forced to move. They therefore become a significant part of a larger pattern

of "large-scale out-migration to urban slums" and "emigration overseas" (Petras, 2003, p. 18). On the same note, the impact of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed in 1994 by the US, Canada and Mexico, is also devastating peasant and indigenous communities in Mexico. Petras claims that, "over two million peasant families—mostly small farmers and Indians have been forced off the land since NAFTA was implemented" (2003, p. 17). This is largely due to the falling price of corn, which renders it unprofitable to produce in Mexico. Fanjul and Fraser (2003, p. 2) show that "prices for Mexican corn have fallen more than 70 per cent since 1994," while US corn exports to Mexico have expanded by a factor of three. Furthermore, the corn consumed in Mexico which is imported from the US, comes from farms mostly cultivated by Mexican migrants, who have been forced off their own fields by land privatization. Structural reforms thus lead them to their competitors, which are massive, industrialized and foreign. This situation captures the irony and the violence of the neoliberal imperialist system. These new economic dynamics which are drawn from neoliberal policies strengthen the new imperialist superpower.

Mexico's case is not isolated, but is part of a broad range of countries, communities and people worldwide that are at the receiving end of neoliberal violence. A similar example to that of Mexico's happened during the implementation of neoliberal reforms in Colombia, ushered in with the US-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA) in 2006 (for more, see chapter 3 in this volume). The structural reforms forced peasants to cease growing their original crops and instead opt for the cultivation of coca. The reforms, plus the war against drugs, created massive internal displacement in Colombia and promoted flight abroad. Avilés (2008, p. 417) explained the situation in a very concise way:

> "The decline in the international price of coffee, intensifying agricultural competition from global producers, and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises have contributed to rural landlessness and economic inequality. It also contributed to thousands of Colombians committing themselves to growing and selling more profitable crops—coca and opium poppies—in the decade following the beginning of Colombia's embrace of neoliberalism (the 1990s)".

Racism and the New Imperialism

Border imperialism and the new imperialism share roots in ideologies of racism. The reliance on either contracted or undocumented migrant workers has produced a large rural labour force for the US. Exploitation by the US needs to rest on some kind of discourse or ideology to legitimize this practice; this is when racial propaganda begins to matter. Through arguments and processes that construct migrant workers as inferior, or as deviants, and not privy to "naturalization," the state and the media advance an essentially racialized rhetoric in the hope that citizens will internalize patterns of superiority and acquiesce to the exploitation of others (Walia, 2013, p. 62). The concept of imperialism as a syndrome (see the Introduction) is reflected in the narratives of the state and the media. It is therefore relevant because one can see that the values, ways of living, social hierarchies, ways of producing, consuming and much more are conveyed through those narratives. They are then internalized and replicated into everyday social relations without questioning the patterns of the oppressive system.

This is a crucial moment where the global structure and ideologies of border imperialism enter a more intimate place, that is, the domain of interpersonal relationships. Certain practices towards migrant people in this case are starting to be accepted and normalized. Moreover, Walia (2013, p. 40) also notes that, "simultaneously, the reinforcement of physical and psychological borders against racialized bodies is a key element through which to maintain the sanctity and myth of superiority of Western civilization". In the same vein, the widespread representation of "illegal immigrants" as stealing jobs is a direct strategy to construct migrants as a potential threat to the citizen (Sharma, 2005). However, a majority of migrants who are able to legally immigrate partly due to their education level then find that their educational qualifications are not recognized by the authorities, after they have arrived in the country. As for "illegal" migrants they end up working in sectors and conditions that would hardly appeal to citizens. It is clear that non-Western workers who have been heavily oppressed by older patterns and processes of colonialism and racism are now represented as the "enemies", the ones to restrain and control (Sharma, 2005; Walia, 2013). In addition, the US' structural change, in shifting the matter of undocumented migrants from civil law to criminal law, shows the method whereby the state creates deviants to exercise and legitimize its domination. Due to past colonial history, liberal states avoid the risk of being seen as openly racist and thus

avoid overtly targeting one particular ethnic group (even though the post 9-11 period has especially targeted Arabs and Muslims for "profiling"). Instead, the state personifies itself as a victim that needs protection against the "criminals," in this case the "illegal" migrants (Walia, 2013). Therefore, this trick enables the state to strengthen physical and psychological borders in order to protect itself, that is, to protect its domination.

Conclusion

Border imperialism theory is contiguous with new imperialism theory. It adds a focus on aggressive territorial control comprised by borders. Spatial elements are not perhaps as important in the new imperialism theory, which tends to emphasize "empire without colonies". However, through this essay I hope it has been shown that migration control means territory still matters. It was also demonstrated how neoliberal structural reforms are directly targeting people, often the ones that have suffered a long history of domination from colonialism. Therefore, new imperialism seems to be the new expression of domination in the contemporary world. Paying special attention to the ideology of cultural imperialism shining through mainstream media, shows how a system of migrant exploitation is legitimized. Also, through narratives of panic and crisis, conceptualized as a permanent state of emergency (Pandolfi, 2010), the US is able to apply some significant changes in law towards migrants, namely by producing a narrative that creates an imperative to build spaces in order to restrain and control the "terrible" flows of persons who instantly become "criminal" by virtue of their arrival in the US.

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