TITLE: Imperialism and Immigration

KEYWORDS:

migration, refugees, asylum, imperialism, remittances

DESCRIPTION:

This chapter discusses the contemporary role of migration within imperialist capitalism, with particular attention to how migration is structured by borders.

MAIN TEXT:

While migration has always been a feature of human societies, it has taken specific characteristics within imperialist capitalism. Although migration is often presented as an anomaly or disruption to the 'normal' functioning of capitalist societies, it can be more accurately understood as 'an integral element of the evolving process of production restructuring and working-class reconfiguration' (Pradella and Cillo, 2015: 47; also Hanieh, 2018). Borders structure imperialism, enabling multiple regimes of accumulation, differentiated geographically and socially.

Migration has taken various forms throughout the development of imperialism; this chapter focuses predominantly on the contemporary context, since the global financial crisis of 2007/2008. Following an introductory discussion, the chapter outlines: the role of immigration controls enforcing international divisions of labour; the production of migrants as a reserve army of labour; immigration controls' creation of differential conditions for

exploitation within the same country; and the role of racism. The consequences for class

structures and class struggle are further explored through a case study of Britain.

Many scholars have noted the role of borders in sorting and filtering labour under capitalism

(e.g. Anderson, 2010a; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Hanieh, 2018). Bloch and McKay (2016)

note the 'uneven opportunities to migrate, with border controls aimed at excluding some

groups while the global elite can move freely; the growth of forced migration as a

consequence of North/South relations and the need of capitalism for low-paid and often

precarious workers' (5). In recent decades, a hardening of borders has been accompanied by

increased 'cooperation as neighbouring states work together against shared threats to their

sovereign control over their territories' (Jones, 2016: 68-9). Border controls have

proliferated, both internally, within states' national territory, and externally, through

imperialist states' control over workers' movements beyond their borders, both directly, for

example European Union and NATO deployments of warships against migrant boats in the

Mediterranean, and through paid proxies, such as the EU's deal with Turkey since 2016 and

the United States 'Southern Border Plan' involving Mexico.

Just as imperialism develops as a direct consequence of the internal contradictions of

capitalism (Lenin, 1916/1975; Yaffe, 2006), racism and immigration controls are driven by

the imperialist division of labour (Williams et al, 1979; Cross, 2013). Migration of labour and

export of capital are part of the same process: countries' relation to capital shapes

conditions for migration by its citizens, and where labour-intensive processes are required

close to the point of consumption, it is difficult to export production and so instead labour is

often imported to imperialist countries. Social care, catering and hospitality, construction,

and some parts of food processing, logistics and agriculture are all typical of this tendency. For example, in the United States three quarters of agricultural workers were born in Mexico and over half of these lack immigration papers and are therefore more susceptible to exploitation (Delgado Wise and Márquez Covarrubias, 2013: 127). Immigration controls regulate mobility according to the needs of capital and create differential terms for inclusion. Racism reflects these differentiated conditions and encourages their acceptance as 'natural'.

Lenin (1916/1975) defines imperialism as a stage of capitalism characterised by the domination of the economy and society by monopoly finance capital, resulting from intrinsic capitalist tendencies toward expansion and concentration (For more recent applications see Yaffe, 2006; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2013). Finance capital represents the fusion of banking and manufacturing capital into massive multinational companies, whose operations are international but whose ownership and management are concentrated in a handful of countries. 'Imperialist' and 'oppressed' are used in this chapter as shorthand for countries' relationship to this system. There are significant differences of degree and quality within each category, including whether an oppressed country has political independence, which leads Lenin (1916/1975) to sometimes use 'dependent' to refer to 'countries which, politically, are formally independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence'. Countries' relationship to imperialism is understood here as fundamentally rooted in their material relation to global capital, mediated by such other factors.

Maintaining imperialist divisions of labour

Foster et al (2011) point to the dependence of imperialist super-exploitation on the immobility of labour, highlighting the role of borders in containment and differentiation as well as exclusion. Production and reproduction operate across the uneven space of international capitalism, with caring relations shaped by the demands of differentially constituted labour regimes and restrictions on movement and rights of migrating workers' 'dependents' (Strauss, 2015). Since the 1970s a new international division of labour has developed, 'to separate labor-intensive industrial production operations from information-rich capital intensive operations, and to relocate the former closer to new overseas strategic sources of cheaper labor' (Delgado Wise and Márquez Covarrubias, 2013: 118). As these authors demonstrate using the case of Mexico, Structural Adjustment Policies during this period created new arrangements to open oppressed countries to foreign capital, leading to production for export and the dismantling of many countries' forces of production, both agricultural and industrial, contributing to a huge surplus population and increasing pressure to migrate. Over the same period, immigration controls tightened in many imperialist countries, containing the vast majority of this surplus population within oppressed and underdeveloped countries.

This is part of a longer history. Feldman (2012) points to the similarities between contemporary restrictions on migration from poorer to richer countries and previous policies of 'containment' against the Soviet Union, which aimed at undermining the potential for socialist countries to inspire revolution in Europe and elsewhere. He quotes the

American diplomat George Kennan, credited with designing the cold war containment strategy, who wrote in 1948:

> We [the USA] have 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. In this situation, our real job in the coming period ... is to maintain this position of disparity. To do so, we have to dispense with all sentimentality ... we should cease thinking about human rights, the raising of living standards and democratisation (cited in Feldman, 2012: 78)

This parallel, between the containment of socialism and the containment of the poor, is not coincidental. The relative privileges of large sections of the population of imperialist countries depend on both maintaining the incorporation of oppressed countries within capitalism and preventing their populations from escaping exploitative conditions through migration. To put this another way, autonomy of mobility for some workers is enabled through restrictions on geographical mobility for other workers, which enforce profitable mobility within the capitalist labour process.

Migrants as a reserve army of labour

Marx (1890/1967) argues that capital accumulation necessarily produces a relative surplus population, or reserve army of labour (RAL). Marx (1890/1967) assigns the RAL the importance of: 'a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production' (592), disciplining the active labour army (ALA) through competition, forcing workers 'to submit to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital' (595), and determining overall

wage levels, to the extent that: 'the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated ... by the varying proportions in which the working-class is divided into active and reserve army' (596). The RAL-ALA composition is thus central to the labour-capital relation.

In an earlier period of capitalism, emigration from Europe to the Americas and Australasia provided an outlet for surplus workers, totalling around 70 million people between 1850 and 1920, equivalent to 17% of Europe's population in 1900, limiting the expansion of the RAL and consequent impoverishment within some of the major imperialist countries (Smith 2015: 108-109). In the more recent period, migrants from oppressed countries have often been described as an RAL for imperialist countries, who can be called on during periods of increased labour demand and sent home when demand falls (Castles and Kosack, 1973; Wills et al, 2010). Pradella and Cillo (2015: 48) argue that today's global RAL: 'is accessed by Western European capital through outsourcing/offshoring, trade and immigration'. Smith (2015: 110) outlines the important role of migrant labour from oppressed nations in imperialist countries over recent decades, including the US, EU and Japan, and argues that in the US the 'much larger inflow of super-exploitable Southern labor [during the 1990s] partly explains the United States' relative economic dynamism vis-à-vis Europe'. But as Miles (1986) points out, many of those who migrate were in work prior to migration, contradicting their characterisation as an RAL en masse. While the RAL today is overwhelmingly concentrated in oppressed countries (Foster et al 2011), attempts to move are met with systematic violence and the numbers who move are negligible in shifting the international distribution of the RAL.

An empirically grounded and nuanced application of the concept of the RAL to migration

might be achieved by considering the impact of borders in creating class fractions with differing RAL-ALA distributions (Vickers, 2019). Restrictions on migrants' rights in many imperialist countries force them disproportionately into the RAL – whether through precarious and/or low-waged employment that makes migrants constantly on the lookout for the next job or an additional job, or through outright unemployment, both representing available labour from employers' perspective. Within segmented labour markets the higher RAL-ALA ratio of migrant populations contributes to lower wages and consequently higher profit margins. State immigration controls play a central role in producing migrants as special forms of cheap labour.

Migration and immigration controls

Migration allows for fluctuations in demand for labour and provides skilled labour without the normal costs of training. Internationally, trends are converging toward temporary and seasonal labour migration under a discourse of 'managed migration'. In the US, despite a trend toward more Mexican migrants settling for the long term, they 'are often subject to labor precarization and social exclusion', including substandard housing, discrimination in public schools, low wages, and limited access to health care (54.1% lacking health insurance) (Delgado Wise and Márquez Covarrubias, 2013: 129). The operation of borders has shifted, in ways that Hanieh (2018) summarises as the securitisation of borders, the growing involvement of private capital and Non-Governmental Organisations in migration management, and the externalisation and extra-territorialisation of borders. These developments have increased the discipline exercised by states over the working class,

incorporated increasingly wide layers of the population within the physical and ideological operation of racialised border controls, and sharpened lines of differentiation.

The percentage of the world's population who are resident outside their country of origin has not changed substantially in recent decades, although a growing global population has led to an increase in absolute numbers (Crawley et al, 2018: 14). Migration occurs on a significant scale between imperialist countries and between oppressed countries, with the latter increasing in significance in recent years, 'often clustering in special economic zones located on borders, and producing goods within regional production chains … partly indicative of the regionalization of capitalist production circuits, and the emergence of new poles of accumulation in places such as East Asia' (Hanieh, 2018). Imperialism also creates structural tendencies for migration from oppressed to imperialist countries, on terms that leave little agency for migrants, and politicises these movements as a 'problem' requiring management. This results in class fractioning within imperialist countries, mirroring the international division of labour.

Some of the main drivers of contemporary migration include: conditions of poverty and inequality that lead families to sponsor some of their members to move for work and send back remittances; authoritarian state practices in many oppressed countries, driven by the need to enforce exploitative conditions; wars, resulting from imperialist countries' pursuit of profits against their rivals, or as the intervention of last resort against governments that refuse to cooperate with imperialist exploitation; and environmental destruction, resulting from the unplanned and inherently expansionary nature of capitalist production. 'Development' under imperialism does not reduce out-migration; indeed, within sub-

Saharan Africa wealthier countries tend to have higher rates of out-migration than poorer ones (Bakewell, 2011: 132-3). As Cross (2013) shows in detail regarding West African migration to the EU, movements of people have been shaped in part by systematic dispossession of households from their means of production and subsistence effected by capitalist development, alongside the development of sites of transit and recruitment that create opportunities for the sale of labour power.

Remittances provide an important source of foreign currency for oppressed countries to buy imports, benefiting multinational companies, and enable the reproduction of labour power in oppressed countries despite a lack of waged employment and state welfare. For example, Smith (2016) reports: 'in 2013 each of Britain's 210,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers remitted an average of $4,058, three times the annual wages of his (most Bangladeshi migrant workers are male) wife, sister, or daughter working in a garment factory back home' (44). The World Bank (2018) estimates remittances to low- and middle-income countries totalled $466bn in 2017, and the real figure is likely to be higher because many informal transfers are unrecorded. One in seven of the world's population, more than a billion people, are involved in remittances as senders or recipients. Consequently, Hanieh (2018) argues that 'migration (and its associated remittance flows) is a major route through which much of the world's population is integrated into global capitalism', and attacks on migrants have ramifications for their dependents back home. Recipients' reliance on remittances encourages migrants to tolerate poor conditions. A survey of low-paid migrant workers in London found 71% sent money home, on average remitting 20-30% of their income, mostly as contributions to daily subsistence. Those with the highest levels of remittances were also those working the longest hours (Datta et al, 2007b: 51-9). In some cases, such as the EU

following the 2007/08 financial crisis, economic downturns have not led to a decline in migration and remittances, because of migrants' willingness 'to endure considerable hardships to support their families back home' (Schierup and Castles, 2011: 17). In a survey of 402 migrants in North East England during 2014-15, out of those who said they lacked sufficient money for necessities for themselves 31% said they still remitted money (Vickers, 2019). In other cases, such as Saudi Arabia following the fall in oil prices in 2014, mass deportation campaigns spatially displaced the effects economic downturns onto migrants' countries of origin (Hanieh, 2018). Remittances thus do not combat inequalities within imperialism, but rather sustain them in multiple ways.

Migrants' experiences are becoming increasingly polarised, in terms of: 'access to labour markets but also modes of entry into nation states' (Bloch and McKay, 2016: 16). Yet, compared to an earlier period following the Second World War, today: 'not only less skilled but also skilled migrants are now subject to temporary-migration schemes' (Piper, 2011: 70-71). This conditional mobility of labour combines with highly-mobile capital to result in a situation in which: 'workers everywhere no longer have a quasi-monopoly of jobs but must now compete with an apparently "inexhaustible pool of potential labour" in the global economy, creating for capital a supply of labour of comparable efficiency but at different prices' (Lewis et al, 2015: 581). Exports of capital and imports of labour operating under differentiated regimes are thus part of the same process, and internal differentiation has been intensified by reductions in state welfare in many imperialist countries that have accentuated 'the differentiation of the conditions of exploitation and reproduction of labour-power of heterogeneous complexities through the superimposition of the formal

mediation of citizenship (and/or through the reassertion of the formal mediations of race, ethnicity, and gender)' (Starosta, 2016: 83).

Smith (2015: 112) points to the contrast, between surplus labour trapped by immigration controls in oppressed countries and the large numbers of skilled workers who migrate. For example, estimates suggest that more than half the doctors and a quarter of the nurses trained in Ghana emigrate (Bakewell, 2011: 136-7), and from 1995-2004 Tanzania lost 78.3% of its doctors this way (Smith 2015: 112). This 'brain drain', echoed in many other oppressed countries, represents another form of national exploitation, enabling imperialist countries to benefit from training paid for by oppressed countries and creating pressure for oppressed countries to raise wages for professionals, driving within-country wage inequality (Smith, 2015: 112).

'Replacement migration' chains have developed based on countries' relative positions within imperialism, involving, for example, the migration of British nurses to the US or Canada, replaced by South African nurses, in turn replaced by Zimbabwean nurses, all seeking better conditions, or similarly Polish nurses migrating to Sweden, replaced by Moldovan nurses, in patterns that are sector-specific and gendered (Piper, 2011: 64). Farris (2015) points to the connection between the precariousness of migrant women's work and their concentration in the so-called 'reproductive' sector', with 42% of migrant women across the EU-15 countries working in 'the care-domestic sector in private households, the care sector in hospitals, residential care and home care and cleaning activities', not including undocumented migrants performing private domestic work in households in the 'shadow economy' (6-7). In many major destination countries an increase in female participation in

the labour market has created demand for low-paid care-related services, fulfilled for the most part by migrant women (Piper, 2011: 65-6; also Farris, 2015). Gendered migration has thus enabled an increase in non-migrant women's availability for waged labour, offering the illusion of progress toward gender equality.

International inequalities in wages, conditions, state support and overall standard of living lead some people to accept wages and conditions that are poor by the standards of their country of residence, but compare favourably to their country of origin (Anderson, 2010a; Wills et al, 2010: 7). For example, in Mexico the average wage for manufacturing jobs is US$2.57 per hour. In the US, an undocumented Mexican migrant can expect to earn US$5 per hour for similar work, considerably more than if they remained in Mexico even though it is far below the formal US employment rate of US$16.45 (Delgado Wise and Márquez Covarrubias, 2013: 128). These wage differentials are further supported by circuits for the reproduction of labour power that extend across borders, for example through circular migration and transnational family structures, which partially extend the lower costs for the reproduction of labour power in oppressed countries to migrants from these countries within imperialist countries (Hanieh, 2018). This contributes to qualitative differences in workers' relationship to capital, combining with differential rights connected to immigration status.

Beyond borders' role as a filter for labour according to capital's spatially differentiated needs, they also help to shape the character of labour. As Anderson (2010a) argues:

Immigration controls function both as a tap regulating the flow of labour, but also …

as a mould shaping certain forms of labour. Through the creation of categories of

entrant, the imposition of employment relations and the construction of

institutionalised uncertainty, immigration controls work to form types of labour with

particular relations to employers and to labour markets. (301)

Mezzadra and Neilson (2013: 101-102) argue immigration controls do not only 'mould'

those who cross international borders, but also wider class structures. Categories produced

through borders have material, legal and ideological dimensions, combining to harness the

creative capacity of living human beings to generate surplus value for the capitalist class.

All migration has implications for labour, not only that which takes place under formal

economic migration categories. Complementing this, Anderson (2010b) points out the

complexity of the factors that lead to segmented labour markets, including employers'

racialised stereotypes about 'types' of migrants and the requirements of jobs, from formal

skills to 'soft skills' and preparedness to work in certain conditions (109-11). Social networks

can also play an important role in structuring migrants' position within the workforce,

helping migrants find work but sometimes sustaining disadvantaged positions and carrying

obligations that can deepen migrants' oppression (Bloch and McKay, 2016: 12).

Paine (1977) argues that the general population do not directly benefit from migration, but

instead see the consequences of 'ghetto housing, overcrowded schools and hospitals,

sexually frustrated young men, etc., all of which generates social tension which gets blamed

on the migrants themselves' (207). The more that the ruling classes benefit from the super-

exploitation of migrants, by keeping down social provision in the areas where they are concentrated, the more they appear in everyday experience to be a burden. In the absence of strong political movements capable of offering a systematic analysis of the causes of people's problems, this fuels the growth of racism.

The role of racism

Often, academic literature focuses either on migration *or* race. For example, Datta et al (2007a: 404) note the predominant framing in much of the British industrial relations literature of workers according to ethnicity regardless of migration background. Racism has a long history, predating capitalism, but in its current form is shaped by the divisions produced through imperialism, with borders play a central role in structuring racialisation (Hanieh, 2018). As Smith (2016) points out, racialisation is shaped not only by identities or differential conditions within Britain, but also international competition and consumerism:

> The increasingly global character of the social relations of production and the increasing interdependence between workers in different countries and continents objectively strengthens the international working class and hastens its emergence as a class 'for itself' as well as 'in itself', struggling to establish its supremacy, yet, to counter this, capitalists increasingly lean on and utilize imperialist divisions to practice divide and rule, to force workers in imperialist countries into increasingly direct competition with workers in low-wage countries, while using the cheap imports produced by super-exploited Southern labor to encourage selfishness and consumerism and to undermine solidarity. (46)

Migration forms a particularly intense and contested component within this wider system of divisions, leading to the racialisation of British immigration controls (Sivanandan, 1991). By dividing the working class, racism and nationalism increases 'the precarity of labour relations and intensif[ies] the exploitation of virtually all workers' (Pradella and Cillo, 2015: 47).

National oppression forms the basis of racism toward migrants from oppressed countries (Williams et al, 1979), their descendants, and anybody else associated with these countries through skin colour, religion, accent, dress, or other markers. As Cope (2015: 62) says:

> The development of capitalism on a world scale produced deep-seated economic, political and cultural inequalities which, in the minds of its defenders (also its beneficiaries), have congealed *ideologically* around the ascription of supposedly natural characteristics – those which fit them for domination or subjection – to peoples and nations.

This explains the targeting of people that may be diverse in many ways, but have in common an association with an oppressed country. Hierarchical racialised categories shift over time, for example Karakayali and Rigo (2010: 127-31) trace the dominant 'figures of migration' in Europe since the Second World War, moving through the 'guest worker' to the 'refugee' to the 'illegal migrant'. Connections can be traced from these figures to the changing needs and conditions of European capitalism, as the labour needs of post-war expansion gave way to falling labour demand and the strategic use of asylum for Cold War 'dissidents' to demonstrate the supposed moral superiority of capitalist democracies (Schuster, 2003), and

on to the deepening capitalist crisis and consequent drive to create super-exploitable

workers without rights through 'illegalisation' (Oliveri, 2012).

Today, racialised systems of governance reconcile systematic violence and deprivation of

liberty with liberal values and obscure borders' political role:

> One of the most shocking features of this new racism is its capacity to develop
>
> reasonable discourses, apparently based on matters of fact, race-neutral principles
>
> and politically correct postures, through which discriminations become de facto and
>
> de jure acceptable for a large share of the population, still believing in democratic
>
> and egalitarian values.… Besides the crucial criminalizing frame, there are many
>
> other discursive strategies that essentialize, racialize and orientalize migrants while
>
> depicting them as a threat and as a resource in relation to the main interests of the
>
> receiving societies - security, well-being and identity. The representation of migrants
>
> as victims completes the picture: it contributes, at the same time, to patronize and
>
> de-politicize them and to offer a positive self-presentation of Western societies as
>
> 'doing good things for migrants' such as rescuing them from oppressive regimes,
>
> miserable living conditions and backward cultures (Oliveri, 2012: 800-801)

Furthermore, Mishra (2018) describes the connections between racialisation and imperialist

foreign policy: 'launching military campaigns, often without bothering to secure the consent

of a frightened people, and while supporting despotic leaders they talk endlessly of their

superior "values" - a rhetoric that has now blended into a white-supremacist hatred … of

immigrants, refugees and Muslims' (6). People categorised as 'ethnic minorities', who might

be more accurately described as racialised minorities to reflect the active process of

racialisation (Oliveri, 2018), are thereby placed in an oppressed position susceptible to

super-exploitation. This helps shape class relations, in ways that are particularly acute in

imperialist countries, illustrated below through a case study of Britain.

Case Study: migration to imperialist Britain

Applying Lenin's definition, Britain has pronounced imperialist characteristics. In recent

decades Britain's economy has been increasingly reliant on surplus value drawn in from

overseas investments and the financial sector in myriad ways, including returns on loans and

export of financial services (Norfield, 2016). In 2014 Britain's external assets (foreign

investments) totalled £10,171.7bn (ONS, 2015), more than 5.5 times Gross Domestic

Product (GDP). Rates of return from Foreign Direct Investment, which accounts for around

10% of Britain's total overseas assets, were 9% for investments in Africa and 13% in Asia in

2014, compared to 5% returns on investments in Britain and the north of Ireland (ONS,

2015). This represents imperialist super-exploitation.

A large part of Britain's investments abroad takes the form of loans, an example of what

Lenin (1916/1975) calls a 'gigantic usury capital' that is typical of imperialism. Britain is

highly-dependent on the import of goods, with a net deficit of £123.7bn in 2014, and

finances this to a great extent through the export of services, with a net surplus of £89.1bn

(ONS, 2015). 29% of Britain's service exports are accounted for by financial services, the

highest for any of the G7 group of wealthy countries. Financial and insurance services

employed more than a million people in 2013 and accounted for 6.8% of GDP, again the

highest proportion for any G7 country (Banks et al, 2014). Financial services do not produce anything, but simply redistribute surplus value produced elsewhere in the global economy into the hands of British finance capitalists. This reliance on the financial sector places the City of London at the heart of British capitalism, making it vital that the City's global position is sustained.

New migration to Britain

Low-skilled, strongly gendered, and often temporary migration to the EU from outside has grown rapidly in recent decades, alongside highly-skilled migration from outside and various forms of movement within the EU, with increasing polarisation. Schierup and Castles (2011: 23) identify tendencies across Europe toward inclusion of migrants in formal rights alongside on-going 'real economic and social exclusion', enforcing acceptance of low-paid, insecure work. Migration to Britain continued despite the economic crisis, and protecting continued mobility for 'highly-skilled' workers has been a major concern within discussions about Britain's departure from the EU (*Financial Times*, 19 October 2016). In total, around 8.3 million residents of Britain and the north of Ireland were born abroad, around 12.5% of the total population (Alberti, 2017).

In 2008, the Labour government introduced a Points-Based System for migration from outside the EU, representing a new stage in the fine-tuning of immigration to the needs of British capital. This system allocates points according to attributes including qualifications, skills, English language competence, age, and income, with a top tier in which 'high-skilled' migrants, generally from more middle-class backgrounds and speaking excellent English, are granted greater rights, followed by workers with more limited rights, often tied to specific

employers. The bottom tier, for 'low-skilled migrants', was indefinitely suspended as soon as the system was launched, given the availability of labour from other parts of the EU. Differences in migrants' class position within Britain correspond closely to the position of their countries of origin within imperialism. As Datta et al (2007a) note:

> …those coming to Britain from high-income countries have been crucial in helping meet a still growing demand for high-skilled workers, with around a third (36%) of those coming from Japan and a little under a quarter (23.1%) of migrants from Germany who are now living in London finding employment in managerial positions (412)

A policy advisor from a business membership organisation reported that the ability to quickly meet skill needs in response to changing customer demands was a significant motivation for British companies to recruit internationally (Vickers, 2019). They indicated migration chains in some sectors, where graduates in digital and IT industries were leaving North East England for London, increasing the need to bring in migrant labour or outsource to workers resident in another country. At the other end of the workforce in terms of status and pay, key sectors of the British economy are reliant on low-skilled migrant labour.

In 2004, eight formerly socialist countries in Eastern Europe joined the EU, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. They entered the EU in a position subordinate to the interests of the big European imperialist powers; this offered British capital access to a substantial new source of labour and their subordinate status was reflected in the treatment of migrants from these countries. Poland was the largest single source of EU

migrant labour during this period. Prior to joining the EU Poland had experienced the fastest growth and fastest privatisation of all the former socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the highest unemployment rate of any EU Member State, and lower per-capita GDP than many other Eastern European countries. It shared other typical features of the formerly socialist countries, wherein:

> Job security has been replaced by insecurity, through casual contracts.… [The] unemployed rely on low-value state benefits and on informal legal and illegal income-generating activities.… employers resort to the use of self-employment contracts, enabling avoidance of health and safety responsibilities, regular pay increases and payment of social contributions, and to shed staff more easily.… In some workplaces employers have been quick to dismiss workers who try to join or organize unions. (Hardy, 2008: 6)

This offered a ready supply of unorganised labour under pressure to migrate.

Migrant workers from Eastern Europe have faced systematic discrimination within Britain, based on attributes such as accent and language (Ashe and Nazroo, 2016; Vickers et al, 2016), and have been disproportionately concentrated in poorer sections of the working class. In 2014/15, 83.7% of Polish adults in Britain were classified as economically active, compared to 59.4% of the general population. This reflects the conditional nature of their presence within Britain, dependent on the sale of their labour power. This conditionality has been enforced by special restrictions on access to out-of-work benefits and some other forms of state support, beyond those affecting British citizens and backed by the

deportation of those without means to support themselves. State-enforced compulsion to work reduces the possibility of turning down work because of low pay or poor conditions. In 2014/15, 31.4% of Polish migrants in work were employed in 'Elementary Occupations', more than three times the percentage for the general population, and Polish workers' median hourly pay was £7.94, compared to £10.81 for the general population. The reliance on EU migrant labour in some sectors reached around 40% for 'Packers, bottlers, canners and fillers' and 'Food, drink and tobacco process operatives' (Morris, 2017: 24-5). Dustmann and Fratini (2014) show that EU migrants who arrived during 2001-11 made a net contribution of £20bn to Britain's public finances, representing a massive transfer of wealth to Britain. Although demographics and sectorial compositions differ across Britain, the prevalence of differential inclusion is consistent. Labour segmentation has coincided with social exclusion, including divisions between migrants from different countries, undermining potential for class-based solidarity against exploitative working practices (Datta et al, 2007a: 422-3). Since 2008, growing numbers of people have also moved to move to Britain from Southern Europe, fleeing the even more intense impacts of economic crisis and austerity in those countries (Alberti, 2017).

Meardi et al (2012) argue that the benefits of EU10 migrants for British employers have resulted as much from their mobility, as from their readiness to accept low wages:

> It would be simplistic to see intra-EU mobility as just a strategy, by governments and employers, to lower labour costs and weaken trade unions.... In fact, wages seem to have been affected only marginally in the EU15 ... real wages had already been stagnant in Western Europe for a while, and unions declining, so there was no urgent

need for EU employers to import foreign labour to stop wage or union growth....

more than low costs, the specific attractive feature of the new labour supply relies

exactly on their 'mobility', which offers a corrective to the longblamed 'sclerosis' of

European labour markets. (8)

Sporton (2013: 445) connects the deregulation of labour markets since the 1990s and the

shift to 'managed migration' since 2002, as part of a neoliberal drive to create a workforce

within Britain that is 'flexible' from the perspective of employers but 'precarious' from the

perspective of workers themselves. As part of this shift, they point to the explosion of

agency employment, from 775,000 to 1.37 million between 1997-2007. In a survey of over

1,000 employers, all of those who employed a disproportionately large number of EU

migrants had recruited them via an agency (CIPD, 2013: 16). This has led to invisibility for

many migrant workers at the bottom of supply chains, because their employment via

agencies means their employment is recorded in the category of 'administration, business

and management' - the largest sector of employment for Eastern European workers by far

according to the Border and Immigration Agency in 2008 (Hardy, 2008: 10).

The tailoring of immigration controls to the needs of British capital has been further

reinforced by restrictions on migration on grounds other than employment or investment,

for example to study, for family reunification, or for asylum (Vickers, 2012; 2019). This

reflects compliance with waged labour or private ownership of capital to invest as the

dominant forms of conditionality for migration to imperialist countries. Alongside the

intensifying capitalist crisis, Britain's border controls have extended internally, intensifying

conditions for super-exploitation.

Internalising immigration controls: The 'hostile environment'

In 2013, the Home Office created the Interventions and Sanctions Directorate (ISD), with the explicit aim of building partnerships to push undocumented migrants out of Britain:

> The unit has overall responsibility for removing incentives for people to stay illegally and encourage those who are in the country unlawfully to regularise their stay or leave the UK…. The unit works closely with government departments and a range of other partners across the public and private sectors to identify those migrants accessing such services and benefits to which they are not entitled. (ICIBI, 2016)

In 2014 the government passed an Immigration Act that extended border controls into many areas of everyday life (Wemyss, 2015), including health care, private-rented housing, employment, banking, and driving private vehicles. This built on pre-existing arrangements for data-sharing to enable immigration enforcement, for example a relationship between the Home Office and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), established in 2005 and extended in 2008 (ICIBI, 2016), and restrictions on benefits and health care. A further Immigration Act in 2016 continued down the same road, increasing sanctions for non-compliance.

Businesses, local authorities, charities, and Members of Parliament (MPs), have also been involved in the hostile environment. For example, Bales (2017) discusses the 'arrest by appointment' of 35 workers in July 2016, after their employer, Byron Burgers, told them to attend meetings deliberately timed to coincide with immigration raids. Protests opposing

this collusion followed outside several Byron outlets across Britain. As with many other elements of the hostile environment, this represented an intensification and systemisation of longer-term trends, with precedents including alleged collaboration between the University of London School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) and the Home Office to deport cleaners fighting for a Living Wage in 2009 (*The Guardian*, 27 June 2009). In another example, Corporate Watch (2018) document collaboration between at least 12 London borough councils, the Greater London Authority, homelessness charities, and the Home Office to deport homeless migrants, with similar practices reported in Bristol, Brighton, and other cities with large numbers of rough sleepers. A High Court ruling in December 2017 found the deportation of EU citizens on grounds of street homelessness to be unlawful, but campaigners allege their involvement continued. During 2012-18, MPs reported more than 700 people for suspected 'immigration abuse', presumably mostly constituents approaching them for help (*The Independent*, 23 June 2018).

Migration and the labour aristocracy

Phizacklea and Miles (1980: 6) use the concept of 'class fractions' to describe 'objective position[s] within a class boundary which [are], in turn, determined by both economic and politico-ideological relations', and whose composition and relationships must be empirically established. This offers a way of understanding class divisions arising from imperialist borders and immigration controls, including polarisation within long-established racialised-minority sections of the working class, differentiation among recent migrants, and forms of relative privilege enabled by imperialist super-profits, giving rise to a 'labour aristocracy'. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the latter, in relation to migration. The term 'opportunism' (Lenin, 1915/2005), expresses political tendencies toward the defence of

narrow, short-term interests of particular class fractions rather than the long-term interests of the entire working class. Within Britain, this has taken the form of chauvinist trends within the working class, who align their interests with imperialism and follow the lead of the British ruling classes against workers from other countries. These divisions are unstable, and while processes of fractioning are always underway, distinct fractions often become visible only in moments of intense struggle, when underlying processes burst to the surface in mass collective action.

Within Britain, trade unions have often failed to represent the interests of the whole working class, and have instead tended to consolidate the position of a labour aristocracy whose privileges rely on the maintenance of imperialism and consequently complicity with racism (Clough, 2014; Carbonella and Kasmir, 2018: 14). This gives the labour aristocracy an interest in the fragmentation and subjugation of the working-class majority and provides a material basis for chauvinism and racism among the working class, beyond the purely ideological dimensions discussed by Virdee (2014). This material basis suggests that such divisions are intrinsic to imperialism.

While a minority of racialised minority workers have been drawn into the labour aristocracy, particularly since the 1980s, and their example has been used to encourage aspirational individualism, the majority remain in a super-exploited position that has much in common with new migrants. The enduring insecurity of racialised-minority sections of the working class was vividly illustrated by the attacks on the so-called 'Windrush Generation', which made headline news in 2018. The Windrush Generation refers to people who moved from the Caribbean to Britain in the decades after the Second World War as Commonwealth

Citizens, symbolically represented by the docking of the MV Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948. They were granted British citizenship as part of the 1971 Immigration Act, alongside restrictions on further migration. In 2016 reports began to appear about people within this group being refused access to state services because they had no documents to prove their citizenship. For example, Albert Thompson, who arrived from Jamaica as a teenager 44 years before and found himself denied cancer treatment by the NHS (*The Independent*, 25 April 2018). Hundreds more are thought to have been deported (*The Guardian*, 5 June 2018). Home Secretary Amber Rudd responded to the ensuing public outcry by saying this was all a mistake and subsequently resigned, and Prime Minister Theresa May promised compensation. Yet, these apologies are undermined by the existence of a Home Office pamphlet, first issued in 2010, titled *Coming Home to Jamaica*, which offers guidance to those deported after decades living in Britain. This demonstrates the extent to which lines of entitlement are shifting in the current British context, and borders are expanding their operation to ensnare growing numbers of people. As Schierup and Castles (2011: 24) argue, established members of racialised-minority groups have weaker claims to social citizenship than white citizens and in the context of the capitalist crisis are moving closer to the situation of temporary migrants and refugees.

Britain's labour aristocracy has taken various forms, concentrated in industrial sectors directly connected to colonialism in the late 19th century, higher-paid public-sector workers in the second half of the 20th century, and workers in the financial sector today. Trade unions in Britain today largely fail to organise among, let alone represent, the most oppressed sections of the working class. Membership has fallen, in absolute terms and as a proportion of the workforce, and has become more middle class (BIS, 2017). In 2016, union

membership among people earning over £1,000/week was proportionally higher than among those earning less than £250/week (BIS, 2017: 29). Higher-paid trade unionists outnumbered those in lower-paid roles by 4:1 in 2016, increasing from 2014 when it was 3:1. This was at a time when there were 5.1 million low-paid workers. The concentration of highly-paid workers within Britain's unions cannot be accounted for by gains won through struggle. Indeed, the 'trade union premium', wage differentials associated with union membership, actually fell between 1995-2016 from 15.3% to 7.6% for the private sector, and from 30.4% to 14.5% for the public sector (BIS, 2017: 41).

Following a series of mergers, Britain's trade union movement has become dominated by massive monopolies, with the biggest three unions, Unite, Unison and GMB, together accounting for over half of Trade Union Congress (TUC) membership. This has included the merger of unions whose members are employed at very different levels of seniority, meaning that low-paid workers may be forced to be in the same branch as their managers. In addition, these mega-unions have a significant stake in the system, including huge investments in properties and shares. In 2009 the big three unions received a total income of £386.5 million and paid out only £3 million in strike pay (Clough, 2010). These characteristics of union membership, structures, and financial membership help to explain the historical tendency for British trade unions to be reluctant to support migrant workers, or to be outright hostile (Richmond, 2002). Trade union membership in 2016 was 16.2% among workers born outside Britain, compared to 25% among workers born in Britain (BIS, 2017: 5).

Yet despite these tendencies to divide the working class, disunity and antagonism is not a foregone conclusion. The labour aristocracy is not a mechanical consequence of relative privilege, but also political, and therein lies the possibility for opportunism to be challenged and alliances to be formed. Britain's engineering construction worker strikes of 2009-10 provide an example of both the pressures toward opportunism and the possibility for more internationalist positions to win through.

These strikes began on 28 January 2009, when workers at Lindsey Oil Refinery in North Lincolnshire were told that IREM, an Italian company that was due to take over a third of the contract, on behalf of the French multinational Total, was refusing to employ British labour. Another subcontractor, Shaw's, had issued 90-day redundancy notices in mid-November 2008, meaning that workers already facing redundancy in mid-February would not be allowed to apply for the IREM jobs. They were also told that the Italian and Portuguese workers IREM was planning to employ would be housed on floating barges for the duration of the job, and would be bussed back to the barges for lunch: interpreted as an attempt to keep them separate from British workers and trade unions. The entire workforce across all subcontractors voted for strike action, and the following day over 1,000 workers from Lindsey, Conoco and Easington sites picketed Lindsey. The strike called for international equality and unionisation, driven by grassroots unofficial action, as Gall (2009) describes:

> …when the assembled workers voted to walk out, the entire stewards' committee (on advice from Unite EUOs) resigned in order to distance the union from 'unlawful action'. An unofficial strike committee was then elected which formulated the

strikers' demands following approval at a mass meeting on the strike's third day.

These were: no victimisation for taking solidarity action; all ECI [Engineering

Construction Industry] workers in Britain to be covered by the NAECI [National Joint

Council for the Engineering Construction Industry] agreement; union controlled

registering of unemployed and locally skilled union members, with nominating rights

as work becomes available; government and employer investment in proper

training/apprenticeships for a new generation of ECI workers; all migrant labour to

be unionised; union assistance for immigrant workers – including interpreters – and

access to union advice to promote active integrated union members; and building

links with construction unions on the continent. (418)

Following this, the unofficial strike spread to over 20 sites across Britain.

Neither local strike leaderships nor their unions ever officially endorsed the slogan 'British

jobs for British workers', which some workers used on placards in the early days of the strike,

quoting Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Attempts by the far-right British National

Party (BNP) to intervene in the strikes and recruit to their 'Solidarity' union front were firmly

rebuffed, and BNP members were reportedly chased out of the car park outside a mass

meeting at the Lindsey plant. Yet 'British Jobs for British Workers' was used to characterise

the strikes in much of the capitalist media, ignoring the context in which it had been raised

in the first days of the strike:

Following the government's spending billions of pounds of public money in bailing

out banks and indemnifying them against their losses, the strikers sought to make

the point that they too demanded government protection.... The first strike at Lindsey concerned IREM's practice of exclusively using Italian and Portuguese workers specifically brought into Britain for this work, and excluding local labour, whether British or non-British. So this was not a strike against the use of overseas workers per se, and the strikers did not call for the expulsion, repatriation or sacking of 'foreign' workers.... After the strike committee asserted itself, the slogans on the placards changed to 'Fair access for local labour' where 'local' meant already domiciled worker, and was not a cipher for 'British' or white 'British' workers. The two unions then repeatedly made statements like, 'Our fight is with the employers who want to tear up our [NAECI] agreement and undermine our hard-won conditions at Staythorpe and wherever else. Not with the workers they seek to exploit' (Gall, 2009: 422)

The strike was settled with an agreement that included an end to the segregation of foreign workers.

Following these successful strikes, in June the same year 51 workers employed by Shaw's at Lindsey were made redundant without consultation or the industry norm of the opportunity to transfer to another of the site's contractors, and with only a week's pay in lieu of notice. Simultaneously another subcontractor at the site took on 60 new workers to perform similar work. According to a GMB union press release, a senior manager at the site blamed the refusal of a transfer option on 'an unruly workforce who had taken part in unofficial disputes and who won't work weekends'. Workers responded by calling for unofficial solidarity actions across the industry. Three days later contractors, with the backing of Total,

announced the sacking of a further 647 workers for participating in unofficial strikes. Total initially agreed to talks with unions and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), but failed to turn up. The 647 workers were given the option to reapply for their jobs, seemingly an attempt to weed out leading trade unionists. Workers responded by publicly burning their dismissal notices solidarity strikes spread to more than 20 sites, including Polish workers at Drax in North Yorkshire, with 900 contract workers at the Sellafield plant in Cumbria stopping work for three days. Faced with such unity, Total made a statement expressing hope that its subcontractors at Lindsey would soon reach an agreement allowing work to resume. As 2,000 workers rallied outside Lindsey, the Unite and GMB unions announced their official endorsement of the strikes, with GMB pledging a £100,000 hardship fund. The strike ended with an agreement between Unite, GMB and the managing contractor Jacobs, including the full reinstatement of all sacked workers for at least four weeks, following which national terms would be followed for any further redundancies.

These strikes demonstrated that despite material divides within the working class, and attempts by the capitalist media and politicians to encourage chauvinism, a more internationalist approach can win out. Faced with determined and independent action by workers, the unions had little choice but to give official support, if only to end the dispute. The strike committee at Lindsey played a crucial role in maintaining a degree of independence from the union leadership to drive the action forward. However, it is important not to overstate these victories: even after the 2009 strikes, employers continued to employ migrant workers below industry rates (Gall, 2009: 426-7). Similarly, the danger of a chauvinist direction to trade unionism in the industry did not disappear and required

constant political struggle. Other examples suggest continuing failures by Britain's major

trade unions to integrate migrants, leading to splits in recent years from Unite and Unison to

form new workers' organisations including the IWGB and United Voices of the World (Alberti

and Peró, 2018).

Conclusion

While immigration controls produce tendencies toward class fractioning, to the detriment of

the working class, migration itself offers opportunities for international alliances and

solidarity. Although some have suggested that the presence of immigrants weakens worker

solidarity and radicalism, Strikwerda and Guerin-Gonzales (1998) argue that the evidence

for this comes: 'almost exclusively from the pre-World War I United States or contemporary

Western Europe - both periods of apparent "failure" or "conservatism" of the labor

movement as a whole' (24-5). The authors cite other examples where unions have included,

and in some cases been led by, migrants. Virdee (2014) gives other examples of migrants

who have been part of working-class leaderships in Britain, and Alberti and Però (2018)

discuss more recent examples (also Oliveri, 2012, 2018; Vickers, 2014). Writing about the

exploitation of Russian migrant workers in Europe in an earlier period of imperialist crisis,

Lenin (1913/1977) points to mutual learning and class development through international

migration, both taking workers, 'out of their semi-feudal conditions and … putting them in

the ranks of the advanced, international army of the proletariat', and introducing new

methods, for example: 'Workers who had participated in various strikes in Russia introduced

into America the bolder and more aggressive spirit of the mass strike' (454-7). This reflects

the potential for special kinds of exploitation to produce special forms of resistance and for international migration to strengthen the working class.

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