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Globalization and Borders: death at the global frontier

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belief in international working class solidarity'. These 'core values' add up to what she describes as a commitment to 'internationalism'. Now, these values might well be embodied in resolutions and speeches at party conferences, but, as she herself acknowledges, in the real world, 'the Labour leadership tended to see the bedrock of British security as the Anglo-American alliance'. However, this alliance is nowhere evident in the six core values and, moreover, it can be convincingly argued that it has involved the decisive and consistent violation of all of them. Consequently, it can be reasonably argued that in order to understand Labour's foreign policy since 1951, the starting point should be exploring the reasons for the party's longstanding commitment to American imperialism.

These so-called 'core values' are just so much rhetoric that the leadership feels obliged to tolerate, but they certainly do not inform policy when in government. In the past, they sometimes restricted the Labour government's room for manoeuvre; for example, the Wilson government did not dare send British troops to fight in Vietnam because of the strength of a Labour Left that *did* take her 'core values' seriously. But this did not stop Wilson from wholeheartedly supporting the Americans in every way he could, short of the despatch of troops. Blair, of course, was not troubled by a Labour Left of any consequence and so was able to actually take part in the attack on Iraq, rather than just supporting it. Vickers even argues that Blair's support for the war derived from his 'missionary zeal to make the world a better place'. Great powers do not go to war for such reasons. They sometimes say they do, but this is to appease domestic public opinion, and they are lying.

The reality is that Labour governments have consistently aligned themselves with, and subordinated themselves to, the US, sacrificing each and every principle in the process. Most recently, Labour support for the US war on terror even involved complicity in torture. Once again, this is not to say that Vickers ignores the real world, but, rather, that her account does not have any explanatory power as far as the real motives informing Labour's foreign policy are concerned. Subordination to the US is a policy that British governments follow with grim determination because this is perceived to be in the best interests of British capital.

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Globalization and Borders: death at the global frontier

By LEANNE WEBER and SHARON PICKERING (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 248 pp. £55.00.

I have always hated the idea of living in a gated community, with its manicured lawns and expensive, sanitised security insulating residents from the incursions

of the needy and desperate. This book forces the realisation that I live in one: the whole of the global North, the rich countries of the world, has re-formed itself into a series of connected gated communities.

According to UNITED for Intercultural Action, 14,000 people are known to have died between 1993–2010 trying to enter Europe, in immigration detention or during forcible deportation. By the nature of these things, the numbers are very unreliable and experts estimate that, for every known death at the border, there are two that go unrecorded. In Europe, NGOs like UNITED and the IRR keep tally; in the US, border enforcement officials (and the Mexican government, which records twice the number); in Australia, no one, until the authors of this rich, thought-provoking and moving book tried to assemble an inventory. The borders of the EU, US/Mexico and Australia are the three migratory ‘fault lines’ (channels for large-scale migration because of economic disparities between neighbouring states) analysed in the book.

Counting border-related deaths is an important task for those seeking to challenge globalisation and its inexorable tightening of states’ borders, with the externalisation of controls to transit countries accompanied by their internalisation (into workplaces, housing, health care, education, etc.), so that the border is global and pervasive. The authors discuss the hazards of body counting, a difficult enough process. They examine methods of ‘discounting’, whereby borders are ‘naturalised’ and the ‘illegalised travellers’ (a term used to remind readers that the illegality is imposed by policy) either neutralised or dehumanised. But, as they point out in this compelling study, counting the deaths is not enough: accounting for them is just as important, if not more so.

Accounting means memorialising, bringing victims back, if not to life, then at least into the human race, by naming them and giving an account of their lives and deaths. Accounting also means asking ‘why?’, tracing the chain of accountability for their deaths – beyond the people smugglers where government accountability chains end, beyond the accident and suicide verdicts, to the global controls that make journeys (and life post-arrival) ever riskier for the illegalised travellers. This means uncovering not just the scale of border-related deaths, but also the processes that prevent their recognition as ‘large-scale human rights abuses linked to border protection policies adopted by the global North’.

The authors look at the structural violence of using a ‘state crime/harm’ model, with a continuum from ‘implicit omission’ to ‘explicit commission’. Using headings such as ‘Misadventure or death by policy?’, they show how policy decisions, like the use, by Australian prime minister Howard, of interdiction to prevent landings on the mainland, led to more deaths, as coastguards’ priorities shifted from rescue and landing to prevention of landing. Howard’s policy of replacing permanent refugee visas with temporary protection visas (with no family reunion rights) for boat people led to more women and children having to find riskier ways of joining fathers and husbands; 146 of the 353 travellers who died in the 2010 Christmas Island shipwreck (Australia’s worst) were children, and another

142 women. Weber and Pickering cast their eyes over 'suspicious deaths', including 'crimes of obedience' (such as the use of fatal restraints in deportation), and at suicides and self-harm in the context of the known devastating psychological effects of indefinite immigration detention. As they point out, the damage that border controls do to humans is not limited to deaths. Other forms of harm are discussed, not only self-harm in detention, but also the endemic risk of rape at the US/Mexico border: 60 per cent of women smuggled from Mexico to the US are sexually assaulted. As the zone of criminality (including police criminality), displaced into the border zone by the 'war on drugs', converges with the war on migrants at the US/Mexico border, travellers carrying cash for the smugglers are routinely kidnapped for ransom by drug gangs and police looking for easy pickings or forcibly recruited as drug mules.

We are shown here how the language of border controls inverts the real risks faced by illegalised travellers. By representing them as a threat to state sovereignty and to the wealth and wellbeing of society, governments absolve themselves both from debating the rationality of global economic policies and from contemplating the hazards caused by border controls. To maintain this hegemony, border controls are constantly and deliberately prioritised over even children's welfare. At the same time, border enforcers in the US, Australia and Europe maintain that border enforcement saves lives. But the authors show the spuriousness of some of these claims; on the US/Mexico border, the ratio of deaths to apprehensions more than quadrupled in the ten years to 2009, years when the so-called Border Safety Initiative claimed to reduce, but only displaced, border deaths to more remote areas. The dissonance between protection of the borders and protection of those crossing them cannot, they demonstrate, be resolved.

After a discussion of resistance and rescue (and their criminalisation), the book ends with a valuable discussion of perspectives that can be used to shift the analysis from a state-centred to a human-centred approach, to challenge the global hierarchy of mobility and the state sovereignty doctrine that enforces it. The logical consequence of policies to eliminate illegal travel is a police state; and a human rights approach to border controls, while necessary, is not sufficient, as it leaves states' rights unchallenged. If the fundamental rights of all were recognised without distinction, alternative solutions to human security would be sought to that of 'keeping out the undesirables'. A supranational approach is needed, they argue, to ensure the admission of those most in need. Some of the ideas of scholars and activists brought together in this final section seem absurdly audacious, such as: recognition of a universal right to movement; or extension of the concept of 'responsibility to protect' from military interventions. But, as Weber and Pickering point out, audacious thinking is vital to 'break the counter-productive and tragic cycle of border control, resistance and border-related deaths' and to promote a politics of global justice.