



**BORDER & RULE: GLOBAL MIGRATION,  
CAPITALISM AND THE RISE OF RACIST  
NATIONALISM**

BY HARSHA WALIA

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Harsha Walia's *Border and Rule* is a captivating read as she makes the case for a free, borderless world by showcasing the intricacies and correlations between the contemporary global structures of capitalism, neoliberalism, migration and ethnonationalism around the world. Across four carefully articulated and interlinked sections she urges the reader to look at the migration and refugee crises around the world as a crisis of displacement rather than through an isolated lens of border management and immigration crisis. In doing so, she highlights how the capitalist and imperialist structures around the world function to produce displacement, immobilization, criminalization and exploitation of the global working class and the indigenous people.

Starting in America, the book takes us on a journey around the globe to Australia, Canada, the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Europe, Asia and the Caribbean showcasing how borders divide the international working class and this inequality and racism breeds at the behest of the imperialist, capitalist and the far-right nationalist ruling elite. The book reveals how deeply ingrained in the history of settler colonialism and the institutionalized brutality are the practices of modern bordering and displacement. It further shows how these actions are deeply rooted in the history of state formation and racism against migrants in the form of anti-Black and Islamophobic violence, anti-immigrant xenophobia, exploitation of indentured workers, transatlantic slave trade and the genocide of indigenous and marginalized populations across the Global North.

Walia demonstrates the politics of border imperialism which coexist with and manifest racial population politics across borders and bordering regimes through settler citizenship and illegalized immigration. In this regard, she discusses the role of war on drugs, settler colonialism accompanied by indigenous elimination in state formation and upholding of white

supremacy across the US. She mentions how the politics of migration merged with Reagan's war on drugs in the US which provided a pretext to further promote the imperialist agenda across the world and to this day serves in maintaining US geostrategic and capitalist control over Central America, thereby fueling displacement and dispossession.

Through an analysis of the war on drugs and criminalization of Black freedom, Walia shows how the prison industrial complex evolved in order to imprison and confine the poor Black communities inside the walls of the prison. Thus, by quoting examples of the militarized counterinsurgency operations from Mexico, Guatemala and the rest of Central America, the book illustrates how detention centers and border politics were used by the US to establish its authority at home and abroad. The post-9/11 events set the stage for furthering the imperial wars from domestic to global arena under the pretext of War on Terror against the "agents of terror around the world" thereby giving rise to Islamophobic violence against Muslims. What is perhaps most interesting in Harsha Walia's book is how she manages to make it at once individualistic in approach as well as the way she makes it global and internationalist in scope. By using case studies from Bangladesh's garment factory workers and iPhone workers in China, she argues how export processing zones and neoliberal deregulation and privatization serve as internal bordering regimes whereby division of labor is such that it produces gender and racial inequities.

The book shows how systematic roots of capitalism and imperialism have historically produced migrants and refugees around the world. It takes us further to the colonial production of White Australia with accounts of the oppressive offshore detention centres operating in Australia's Manus Island through structures of carceral control, racial state formation and colonial dispossession. Walia adds another dimension to the discussion by focusing on irregular migration throughout Europe. The chapter titled 'Fortress Europe' aptly illustrates how border control patrols and heightened militarization to restrict border crossings have severely damaged the lives of numerous displaced individuals fleeing from crises across various refugee routes to the EU. In this regard, the book urges one to rethink the global migration crisis in the light of displacement, dispossession, immobility and impoverishment which are a necessary byproduct of the global neoliberal and capitalist regimes.

The author furthers her critique of border politics by analyzing the insourcing of migrant labor through temporary labor migration programmes. She analyzes these programs and the labor migration dynamics that govern through the kafala system in the Gulf states and the much-lauded multicultural Canada. As she notes, these programs are governed by the

features of indentured work, legalized segregation, the extraction of migrant labor, and a unique mode of racialization. The author argues how the kafala system acts as a form of capture and control having its origins in the British colonial rule rather than having Arab or Islamic roots and thereby ties Gulf Capitalism to other migrant worker programs around the world. Similarly, she picks apart the myth of multiculturalism in Canada by analyzing how migrant workers in Canada are managed. She posits that Canadian multiculturalism is based on white settler colonialism and racial-capitalist political economies which she illustrates through examples of their seasonal agricultural worker and caregiver programs.

In the final section, Harsha Walia ends with a discussion of the far-right nationalist movements around the world. She illustrates how race and nationhood is mobilized to propel the imperial and capitalist agenda forward. While Walia's book makes use of case study analysis, this section in particular makes an intriguing read as she binds together the elements of White Nationalism, Zionism and Hindutva ideologies having ethnonationalist roots. She shows how Trump's Muslim ban and Islamophobic violence incurred upon Muslims in Kashmir and India through Modi's Hindutva ideology as well as Israel's treatment of the Palestinians throughout Gaza govern similarly as she calls them 'ethnonationalist bedfellows.' In the same vein, she mentions how the ideology of penal populism has been used historically to uphold the far-right nationalist agenda in the Philippines and Brazil under the rules of Duterte and Bolsonaro through policies of criminalization, violence, extrajudicial executions and land grabbing against the Indigenous communities. Thus, by drawing compelling parallels between these countries Harsha Walia urges the reader to reconsider the politics around migration, borders and displaced people in wider contexts of state formation on the basis of capitalism, racism and ethnonationalism. Lastly, she brings the evils of eco-fascism into the picture by criticizing the narratives built around restricting immigration and militarizing borders in order to protect the environment. This she argues are in reality just a façade to secure White Nationalism throughout the Global North, thereby pressing the need to shift the focus from eco-fascist views on climate displacement and refugees to as she puts it 'extractivist colonialism' and capitalism.

Border and Rule is an absorbing read overall with articulate analysis of the crises surrounding migrants and refugees around the world, interlocking global displacement and migration crises with border politics stemming from neoliberalist, capitalist and ethnonationalist agenda. Although written during the pandemic, the arguments presented in the book are very much relatable even today especially in the light of the treatment of migrants and

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refugees around the world. This brings to mind the Greek migrant boat tragedy which happened earlier this year where more than seven hundred refugees including women and children tragically lost their lives to the sea. The events unfolding in Middle East during the Israel-Palestine war and the more recent attacks by Israel on Lebanon further highlight what Walia argues is the result of a wider, much deeper construct of imperialism to maintain a hierarchical social order where the Global North maintains its hegemony. In this aspect the book serves as a call for active resistance and advocacy for the rights of migrants, refugees and indigenous persons suffering at the hands of imperialist regimes around the world.