

BOOK REVIEWS

Reece Jones, *Violent Borders. Refugees and the Right to Move*, London: Verso, 2017, ISBN 978-1-78478-474-4, 212 pages

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The literature on refugees' experiences has been enriched in recent years as we witnessed a refugees' crisis that has not been seen since WWII. Only the Syrian civil war displaced more than five million civilians, while, according to an UNCHR report published in June 2018,¹ wars, violence and persecution uprooted a record number of 16.2 million people across the world in 2017. The book briefly reviewed here, *Violent Borders. Refugees and the Right to Move*, investigates the tumultuous times we live in, ones in which millions of people leave their homes in search of better opportunities, exposing themselves to dangers, encountering violence to the borders and new walls rising in their way. The author argues that building walls and securing borders does not stop migration, but makes it more dangerous: "...borders continue to kill. Even with the massive amount of attention paid to the issue and the vast funds expended to stop migration, people continue to move in 2016 and the year shattered the record of the number of border deaths, with over 7800 people losing their lives simply trying to go from one place to another".

The book is organized in two parts, totaling seven chapters. The first part, including the first three chapters, investigates the causes and consequences of global migration crisis. Thus, the first chapter- "The European Union: The World's Deadliest Border"- tells the experience of migrants attempting to enter to the EU and notes, using data providing by the International Organization of Migration reports, that more than half of deaths at borders in the past decade (this meaning more than

¹ Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2018/6/5b222c494/forced-displacement-record-685-million.html>.

23.000 people from 2005 to 2015) occurred at the edges of the EU, “making it by far the most dangerous border crossing in the world” (p. 16). The second chapter moves attention to the US-Mexico border, whose current route was established at the middle of 19th Century and which has become a militarized zone over the years (especially after the terrorist attacks from September 11, 2001). The huge increases in funds and personnel and the deterrence philosophy adopted by American border authorities have led to changes in border infrastructure and increased the number of deportees. The most visible change is the construction of the fence at the border after the adoption of the Secure Fence Act in 2006 (more than one third of the border being fenced in 2015, while the remaining section is a priority of the new president Donald Trump). The militarization of the US-Mexico border symbolizes, in the author’s view, a global trend toward hardened and securitized borders: “in the era of globalization, as the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest states has grown, states around the world have deployed new security infrastructure along borders, designed to detect and to prevent the movement of the world’s poor” (p. 46). This idea is also underlined in the next chapter- “The Global Border Regime”- which refers to diverse states such as Israel, India or Australia that are engaging in similar practices (with similar consequences), meant to restrict the movement of people through walls, security agents or mutual agreements with neighboring countries.

The second part of the book argues that other types of boundaries, such as private property and land and sea resources are long-term and widespread modalities by which the states maintain privileges by restricting movement. Chapter 4- “The Global Poor”- sees the movement restrictions at borders today as part of a long-term effort to control the movement of the poor, which has its roots in slavery, vagrancy and poor laws. As citizenship documents and borders crossing procedures have been formalized, the movements of the poor and their access to opportunities have been limited again. And if in the late of 1990 only fifteen countries had walls and fences on their borders, at the beginning of 2016 almost seventy did, the violence of the borders going “hand in hand with protecting the privileges that borders created” (p. 88). The fifth chapter argues that violence at borders that targets migrants fleeing war and economic inequality in search of a better life is the latest stage in a long-term conflict between states and rulers (who control land and want to protect their rights to wealth), on the one hand, and people who move in order to find new opportunities or to leave repressive conditions, on the other. The

last two book chapters are trying to emphasize the role of the borders in perpetuating inequality (in author's opinion free trade agreements make sense if they are accompanied by free movement of workers) and damaging the environment (the author connects the global failure to address issues like climate change to the role played by borders in dividing the world into separate sovereign territories that place the interest of the states above the interests of human beings generally).

Taken as a whole, the book theorizes movement and fixity as a "conflict between the desire for freedom and the desire for control, between people who move around and people who want them to stay in place". It militates for a world of humanity instead of that of walls we live in. The message of the concluding chapter is that thousands of deaths of migrants in the global migration crisis and their harsh treatment would have to make us think more and to reconsider the damage that militarized borders and resources enclosures do to humanity and the earth. Because, "despite the deaths at borders and the violence of the state, millions more people continue to move... By refusing to abide by a wall, map, property line, border, identity document, or legal regime, mobile people upset the state's schemes of exclusion, control and violence. They do this simply by moving" (p. 180).