

# **Immigration: Western Wars and Imperial Exploitation Uproot Millions**

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## **Introduction**

“Immigration” has become the dominant issue dividing Europe and the US, yet the most important matter which is driving millions to emigrate is overlooked is wars.

In this paper we will discuss the reasons behind the massification of immigration, focusing on several issues, namely (1) imperial wars (2) multi-national corporate expansion (3) the decline of the anti-war movements in the US and Western Europe (4) the weakness of the trade union and solidarity movements.

We will proceed by identifying the major countries affected by US and EU wars leading to massive immigration, and then turn to the western powers forcing refugees to ‘follow’ the flows of profits.

## **Imperial Wars and Mass Immigration**

The US invasions and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq uprooted several million people, destroying their lives, families, livelihood, housing and communities and undermining their security.

As a result, most victims faced the choice of resistance or flight. Millions chose to flee to the West since the NATO countries would not bomb their residence in the US or Europe.

Others who fled to neighboring countries in the Middle East or Latin America were persecuted, or resided in countries too poor to offer them employment or opportunities for a livelihood.

Some Afghans fled to Pakistan or the Middle East but discovered that these regions were also subject to armed attacks from the West.

Iraqis were devastated by the western sanctions, invasion and occupation and fled to Europe and to a lesser degree the US , the Gulf states and Iran.

Libya prior to the US-EU invasion was a 'receiver' country accepting and employing millions of Africans, providing them with citizenship and a decent livelihood. After the US-EU air and sea attack and arming and financing of terrorist gangs, hundreds of thousands of Sub-Sahara immigrants were forced to flee to Europe. Most crossed the Mediterranean Sea to the west via Italy, Spain , and headed toward the affluent European countries which had savaged their lives in Libya.

The US-EU financed and armed client terrorist armies which assault the Syrian government and forced millions of Syrians to flee across the border to Lebanon, Turkey and beyond to Europe, causing the so-called 'immigration crises' and the rise of rightwing anti-immigrant parties. This led to divisions within the established social democratic and conservative parties, as sectors of the working class turned anti-immigrant.

Europe is reaping the consequences of its alliance with US militarized imperialism whereby the US uproots millions of people and the EU spends billions of euros to cover the cost of immigrants fleeing the western wars.

Most of the immigrants' welfare payments fall far short of the losses incurred in their homeland. Their jobs homes, schools, and civic associations in the EU and US are far less valuable and accommodating than what they possessed in their original communities.

### **Economic Imperialism and Immigration: Latin America**

US wars, military intervention and economic exploitation has forced millions of Latin Americans to immigrate to the US.. Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras engaged in popular struggle for socio-economic justice and political democracy between 1960 – 2000. On the verge of victory over the landed oligarchs and multinational corporations, Washington blocked popular insurgents by spending billions of dollars, arming, training, advising the military and paramilitary forces. Land reform was aborted; trade unionists were forced into exile and thousands of peasants fled the marauding terror campaigns.

The US-backed oligarchic regimes forced millions of displaced and uprooted pr unemployed and landless workers to flee to the US .

US supported coups and dictators resulted in 50,000 in Nicaragua, 80,000 in El Salvador and 200,000 in Guatemala. President Obama and Hillary Clinton supported a military coup in Honduras which overthrew Liberal President Zelaya--- which led to the

killing and wounding of thousands of peasant activists and human rights workers, and the return of death squads ,resulting in a new wave of immigrants to the US.

The US promoted free trade agreement (NAFTA) drove hundreds of thousands of Mexican farmers into bankruptcy and into low wage maquiladoras; others were recruited by drug cartels; but the largest group was forced to immigrate across the Rio Grande.

The US ‘Plan Colombia’ launched by President Clinton established seven US military bases in Colombia and provided 1 billion dollars in military aid between 2001 – 2010. Plan Colombia doubled the size of the military,

The US backed President Alvaro Uribe,resulting in the assassination of over 200,000 peasants, trade union activists and human rights workers by Uribe directed narco-death squad.Over two million farmers fled the countryside and immigrated to the cities or across the border.

US business secured hundreds of thousands of Latin American low wages, agricultural and factory workers almost all without health insurance or benefits – though the paid taxes,

Immigration doubled profits, undermined collective bargains and lowered US wages. Unscrupulous US ‘entrepreneurs’ recruited immigrants into drugs, prostitution, the arms trade and money laundering.

Politicians exploited the immigration issue for political gain – blaming the immigrants for the decline of working class living standards distracting attention from the real source : wars, invasions, death squads and economic pillage.

## **Conclusion**

Having destroyed the lives of working people overseas and overthrown progressive leaders like Libyan President Gadhafi and Honduran President Zelaya, millions were forced to become immigrants.

Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Colombia ,Mexico witnessed the flight of millions of immigrants -- all victims of US and EU wars. Washington and Brussels blamed the victims and accused the immigrants of illegality and criminal conduct .

The West debates expulsion, arrest and jail instead of reparations for crimes against humanity and violations of international law.

To restrain immigration the first step is to end imperial wars, withdraw troops, and to cease financing paramilitary and client terrorists.

Secondly, the West should establish a long term multi-billion-dollar fund for reconstruction and recovery of the economies, markets and infrastructure they bombed

The demise of the peace movement allowed the US and EU to launch and prolong serial wars which led to massive immigration – the so-called refugee crises and the flight to Europe. There is a direct connection between the conversion of the liberal and social democrats to war -parties and the forced flight of immigrants to the EU.

The decline of the trade unions and worse, their loss of militancy has led to the loss of solidarity with people living in the midst of imperial wars. Many workers in the imperialist countries have directed their ire to those 'below' – the immigrants, - rather than to the imperialists who directed the wars which created the immigration problem.

Immigration, war, the demise of the peace and workers movements, and left parties has led to the rise of the militarists, and neo-liberals who have taken power throughout the West. Their, anti-immigrant politics, however, has provoked new contradictions within regimes, between business elites and among popular movements in the EU and the US. The elite and popular struggles can go in at least two directions – toward fascism or radical social democracy.

