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Border Abolition and How to Achieve It

Nick Gill

> '[I]t is vital to express the unfinished'
> (Thomas Mathiesen, 1974: 16)

It is difficult to conceive of 'progressive' states that continue to employ exclusionary, militarised and subjugating border controls. There may be certain conditions under which border controls are defensible from a progressive point of view[1] but generally speaking, borders are responsible for not only widespread and needless violence, but also perpetuating the conditions for economic exploitation, neocolonial oppression on a global scale and the large scale wastage of human lives in a proliferating number of camps and precarious forms of status around the world. While not everyone is inhibited by border controls, the differential mobility of the world's population, striated along lines of racial, national and economic difference, is a hallmark of modern society. Conversely, large scale border liberalisation has been associated with greater peace (Gill, 2009), increased global prosperity (The Economist, 2017), greater human freedom (Bauder, 2017), reduced global inequalities and an enhanced capacity to adapt to global environmental change (Geddes & Jordan, 2012).

Scholarship that discusses large-scale border liberalisation has given much attention to whether or not such a project would be a good idea. As advocates for a world without

[1] Walzer (1983: 39) for example writes that 'The restraint of entry serves to defend the liberty of welfare, the politics and culture of a group of people committed to one another and to their common life'. From a different direction, the anarchist thinker Nick Megoran (2017) has discussed the notion of a 'good border' in the context of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan boundary. Paul Collier (2013) has also defended international borders from an ethical point of view.

restrictions on immigration, for example, Pécoud and de Guchteneire (2007) set out the case for large scale border liberalisation from the perspectives of ethics and human rights, economics, global society and with respect to the practical aspects of a world without border controls. Far less attention has been given to how such a project could be brought about, however. This has been described by Bauder (2017: 57) as a tendency to simply

> 'call for an end to migration restrictions without developing alternative models of migration or governance. In other words [critical scholars] *negate* the contemporary condition of closed and controlled borders… As pure negation, however [they] say nothing about the conditions under which unconstrained human migration ought to occur… As pure negation, the "dream" of freedom of migration remains intangible' (ibid, 2017: 58)

This chapter focuses precisely on the question of 'how' to achieve border abolition. In doing so it flirts with James Ferguson's call to develop a more sophisticated Left art of government. Rather than occupying a position of pure critique in response to the international proliferation of border controls, which can get caught into a cycle of 'gestures of refusal' (Ferguson, 2011: 62) that is 'always 'anti', never 'pro''(ibid: 62), Ferguson entreats us to forgo

> the pleasures of the easy, dismissive critique and instead turn a keen and sympathetic eye toward the rich world of actual social and political practice, the world of tap-turning and experimentation (ibid: 67-8).

Going someway down this road, the chapter undertakes something of a thought experiment by exploring the role that states themselves might play in the process of border abolition. While critical scholars have tended to view states and border controls as inextricable, the chapter explores the possibility that states could feature in a world without international border controls, and could even be co-opted into bringing such a world about. Key to this argument are a set of distinctions: between borders and boundaries, between border abolition and both open borders and no borders, and between sudden and gradual forms of border liberalisation.

The primary purpose of the chapter is to expose the extent of, and embark upon, the intellectual and practical experimentation that becomes necessary if we are to be able to talk about truly progressive states. The argument is divided into four parts. In the first, a specific understanding of the notion of abolition is set out that admits a role for states in abolitionist politics. In the second, the implications of this understanding are explored in the context of border control by distinguishing border abolition from both 'open borders' and 'no borders' as they are currently understood in literature that deals with large scale border liberalisation. In the third, one possible form that border abolition could take, via

international treaty, is outlined. And in the fourth, the chapter reflects on the challenges and risks of such a process.

1 **Abolition**

What is abolition? Its simplest definition is 'to put an end to' (Schwarz, 1993) but a further survey of dictionary definitions reveals three further connotations. The first can be derived from its etymological association with destruction. Coles' 'An English Dictionary' (2015) defines abolition as 'destroying, putting out of the memory'. Similarly, the New Oxford Dictionary of English (OUP, 1998) traces the word's origin to 'the Latin abolere, meaning 'destroy'.

A second connotation relates to the 'official' nature of abolition captured in the definitions offered by both the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) and the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995). They define 'abolish' as 'to officially end a law, a system or an institution' and 'to officially end a law, system etc, especially one that has existed for a long time'.

Both the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) and the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) also include the third connotation: the notion that abolition can refer to the ending of a *law*. The Collins English Dictionary (2015) includes this connotation too, defining abolition as 'to do away with (laws, regulations, customs etc)'.

The first two of these connotations hint at the role that states might play in the abolition process. With regard to the first, Max Weber famously defined the state as the monopoly of legitimate violence over a given territory. If we are prepared to make the assumption that violence can be equated with destruction, then both abolition and states are destructive by nature. This implies that states as institutions may be well placed to carry out, support or facilitate abolitionist work. Why? Because they have at their disposal mechanisms of coercion that might be necessary to put an end to deeply culturally and historically engrained unjust and suppressive practices (see Clarke, this volume, on the agonising ethics of state coercion).

With regard to the second connotation, Bourdieu (2014) identifies being 'official' as central to the symbolic capital of states. The concept of the official refers to 'the idea that there is a group consensus on a certain number of values' (2014: 29). As such, to be official is to represent 'the idea that the group has of itself' (Ibid: 48). Who voices this idea is of utmost importance. Bureaucrats – good ones at least[2] – are adept at what Bourdieu calls 'universalization' (33): that is, the transformation of something particular into something universal that represents a claim about the group as a whole. Officialdom is able to transcend the grounds of disagreement, such that even parties that are disadvantaged by a decision accept it because it has been mandated in what Bourdieu calls a 'trans-personal' way (Ibid: 45). Although states themselves struggle with this process of universalisation, without states it is harder to claim that something is official because they command the technologies best suited to achieving it: including a strong claim to representation (for example via democratic accountability) and a whole edifice of cultural and performative resources – from insignia and flags, to uniforms and architectural forms – that Bourdieu labels 'theatrical' technologies (Ibid: 48). So we might reason that if abolition is indeed to be 'official', then states probably offer the most solid grounds for its fulfilment. States are at the hub of officialdom, and monopolise the discursive and symbolic resources that constitute it.

There are indeed various progressive abolitionist activities that have pitched the coercive and symbolic power of states or the international state system against long-lived, subjugating practices. Many of these represent the search for profit in a capitalist society. These activities include the campaigns for the abolition of slavery, whale, seal and fox hunting, vivisection and child labour. This is not to say that when something is officially, or legally, abolished it automatically ceases. But state-backed abolition has been seen by activists in these areas as crucial to their success in gaining traction and popular support because it is via states that the idea that society wants 'to have and give of itself' (Bourdieu, 2014: 48), is often established and promulgated.

The third connotation, however, complicates the possibility of abolitionist states because, unlike the situation in which states either intervene, or are entreated to intervene, in subjugation that arises owing to the over-enthusiastic pursuit of profit in the market

[2] Which Bourdieu dubs 'heros of the official' (Bourdieu, 2014: 29)

economy, there are other situations in which the focus of abolitionist efforts are *aspects of states themselves*, such as repressive laws and taxes. Think of the movements to abolish immigration detention and prison, for example. This type of struggle introduces to the notion of abolition a certain tautology. If abolition describes the legal end of a law then what is necessary to achieve abolition is the contortion of 'the law' against the law itself, or, more broadly, 'the state' against 'the state'. In the specific context of border abolition, this tautology applies even more acutely since it raises the question of how borders can be abolished if borders are prerequisites for the very existence of states themselves.

Such is the challenge of conceiving of the progressivity of states, as set by the editors of this volume, that it is necessary to fashion a response to both the general challenge of tautology with respect to the law, and the specific challenge of tautology with respect to the conditions of possibility of states, before it is possible to continue examining the question of the relation of border abolition to states. In the remainder of this section I outline two intellectual resources that may help to constitute such responses.

In response to the first challenge, anti-essentialist state theorists emphasise how the state system is constructed through discourse, structural effects and performance, rather than being an ontologically stable 'thing' (Dunn, 2010). The approach is traceable to Philip Abrams, who likened 'the state' to an idea, *the effect of which* is the appearance of something that is coherent and constant. The idea of the state, for Abrams (1988: 79), has the effect of masking and concealing profound inconsistencies in the way the state is enacted and practiced. According to this view, the state should be examined 'not as an actual structure, but as the powerful, metaphysical effect of practices that make such structures appear to exist' (Mitchell, 2006).

Geographers have adopted this perspective explicitly in dealing with the messiness, inconsistencies and prosaic nature of states (Painter, 2006). Although the history of modernity as it is commonly written features both coherent historical states, as well as a supposed historical correspondence between states and nations, neither of these bears much scrutiny (Massey, 2005, Agnew, 2009). Doreen Massey (2005) is critical of what she regards as the 'isomorphism between space/place on the one hand and society/culture on the other' (Ibid: 64), leading places to be associated with culture while nation-states have historically been regarded as somehow above or outside cultural influences (see also

Mitchell, 2006). In reality, states are culturally and spatially produced and contingent in all sorts of ways, and have been since their inception (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002, Steinmetz, 1999). This insight emphasises the contingency of states, their performance and their improvisation (Jeffrey, 2013). 'One should reject the notion of the state as a natural thing' Dunn suggests, and focus instead upon the 'citational processes that call it into being' (88).

This anti-essentialist view of states allows for a plurality within states themselves that underscores their fragility, and therefore their reversibility, malleability and challenge-ability. As Cooper puts it, '[p]lural state thinking makes room for divergent kinds of states', including progressive and inclusive ones (2017: 335).

A key resulting possibility in this literature is that of *contradiction* within 'the state'. Because 'the state' is complex, plural and often rather chaotic, it is not unusual to find that different elements 'within' 'it' are working in opposite directions. This certainly makes the state a difficult phenomenon to study (Abrams, 1988)! It is also worth remembering that states are *peopled* institutions, and that charismatic personalities have often had a determinate effect on the course that states take (Jones, 2011). Indeed, there is a complex sociology of states (Bourdieu, 2014: 6).

If we take seriously the possibilities of contradiction within 'the state', it is possible that even abolitionist efforts that target features of the state might find symbolic and financial support from other parts of the state itself, owing precisely to the fictitiousness of the coherence that the label 'the state' purports to convey.

In response to the second challenge, another resource for border abolitionism might be found in a particular distinction between a border and a boundary. 'Borders' are not an unproblematic category, and actually refer to at least two sets of functions: the function of controlling population movement and the function of marking the hinterland of states for the purposes of administration, taxation and the delivery of public services. These two functions can be distinguished relatively easily by referring to the first set as 'border' functions, primarily concerned with the regulation of human movement, and the second as 'boundary' functions, primarily concerned with administrative demarcation.

The conflation of these two sorts of functions might be related to the history of border studies. 'Border studies' writes Paasi (1999: 70), were conceived 'at the turn of the [twentieth] century in order to depict a modern world that was becoming territorialized along rigid boundary lines that characterized a state-centred system'. They concerned themselves with 'removing ambiguity from the process [of] demarcating political boundaries' (Jones, 2009: 181). Such a history introduces the need to recover, in some way, from the apparent over-signification of borders in historical scholarly work. One way to do this is to recognise that boundaries can be distinguished from borders and should be regarded as 'social… economic, cultural, administrative and political… practices and discourses' (Paasi, 1999: 70) rather than lines on maps. Casey (2011) too, posits that 'borders diverge from boundaries in certain ways' (Ibid: 385), making reference to borders as 'clearly and crisply delineated [and] resistant to the passage of goods or people' (Ibid: 385), while a boundary 'is porous in character (like the human skin), admitting the passage of various substances through it' (Ibid: 385).

This distinction is useful for the current argument because it admits the possibility of a functional edge without an exclusionary border. Indeed, we could turn to certain already-existing boundaries that point towards a possible world without borders but that retains states: such as the boundaries between American states, between England and Wales, and within the European Schengen area (see Kunz and Leinonen, 2007). Boundaries here mark the administrative hinterlands of polities, but are not policed and securitised by them. In short it *is* possible, and actually not all that difficult, to conceive of an interface between state territories that exists in administrative terms but is not concretised through checkpoints, walls and barriers.

2 Open Borders, No Borders and Border Abolition

In the previous section I reflected on the nature of abolition, noting that abolition may be violent, official and aimed at particular laws. I then suggested that given these characteristics of abolition, states are in a good position to abolish. If we adopt an anti-essentialist understanding of the state and distinguish borders from boundaries, this applies even when the thing being abolished is part of 'the state' itself (like borders). I turn to how the pursuit of border abolition with recourse to the symbolic power of states and the international state system sits alongside the concepts of open borders and no borders that

dominate existing literature on large-scale border liberalisation. I argue that, in fact, neither model adequately conceptualises the project of border abolition.

Open borders is a position that has been supported by a diverse range of scholars (Bauder, 2017). These diverse perspectives arise from the very different motivations for pursuing free movement – the pursuit of freedom in the case of libertarians, the pursuit of economic growth in the case of market-economic approaches, and the counteraction of the exploitative entrapment of large sections of the global population in low wage and insecure forms of work in the case of Marxism and its variants. Given these differences it is difficult to generalise about open borders as a coherent school of thought. Nevertheless, the very concept of 'open' borders implies that whatever is open will continue to exist after free population movement has been established, with the implication that, as some future point, it could be closed again[3]. This introduces uncertainty about the longevity and stability of free movement under open borders, which retain the possibility of closure on the basis of national interest. In short, open borders is not *binding* over states because contained within the very possibility of openness is closure itself. Under abolition, by contrast, it would be illegal to close borders again. Borders would not only cease to be open, they would cease to *officially* exist. The distinction between open borders and border abolition rests, then, on sovereignty. Border abolition would entail wresting sovereignty over borders away from nation-states.

Might this imply that No Borders is more compatible with the abolition of border controls? No Borders is part of a wider, usually anarchist, political position that questions a range of relationships of power in the modern era and can be associated 'with demands for a world beyond existing structures of governance' (Bauder, 2017: 64). This world would 'entail the transformation of the ontologies that underlie contemporary political configurations' (Bauder, 2014: 76), giving rise to futures that are 'not yet knowable or even conceivable' (Ibid: 78). Proponents of No Borders are critical of open borders thinking, describing what they see as 'The Right's call for open borders which can serve as a continuation, in new form, of the strategy of "accumulation by dispossession"' (Anderson et al., 2009) that characterises exploitative capitalism. Instead of reproducing

[3] The philosopher Lyotard (1988: 286) makes this point in relation to absence and presence. 'That any being whatever may be absent, and this applies all the more strongly to being itself, is in my view an idea that is much too simple, for at least the absence of being is present, being presents itself *in absentia*'.

problematic relations in this way, No Borders 'signals a new sort of liberatory project, one with new ideas of "society"…' (ibid: 6). No Borders is

> a demand that calls for a fundamental transformation in theoretical, social, psychological and cultural behaviour and norms… [it] calls into question the conditions of possibility for some of the most basic categories of modern political life: namely, the nation-state, the international system, and citizenship. The demand for No Borders radically challenges modern understandings of the subject and location of the political (ibid , 2013: 40).

As such, No Borders does not afford the opportunity to work with the symbolic power of states to abolish border controls, because the dissolution of states is understood to be bound up with a No Borders world. As Fernandez et al. (2004: 473) make clear

> 'No Borders' as a demand on the state, would thus effectively be a demand that the nation-state give up its own condition of possibility, and is thus a demand that can only be effectively utilized if the nation-state is assumed to be suicidal'.

While some who are opposed to border controls might well support the dissolution of states as well, it is nevertheless possible to conceive of border abolition separately from state dissolution if we accept the distinctions already made in this chapter. It may also be desirable. It is worth noting, for instance, that what anarchists mean when they express anti-statism is rejection 'not so much [of] the specific phenomenon of the state but [of] a broader set of asymmetrical social and power relations typified, justified, and institutionalised by the state' (Ince & Barrera de la Torre, 2016: 11). Cooper (2017) lists various ways states seek to ameliorate these very relations, albeit with highly variable degrees of success. She includes the fact that states

> 'provide social welfare, steward resources, establish fora for public debate, make new critical forms of knowledge possible and … protect populations, including more vulnerable and precarious populations from civil society's violence and discriminations' (338).

I am aware that this perspective on states is contentious. Indeed, so is Cooper (2017), who also lists a host of historical crimes that states are charged with. The nub of the question that we are wrestling with in this book and in this chapter however, is not *whether states are* progressive but rather *how we can make them* progressive. This question insists that states themselves are under construction rather than pre-formed. In other words it challenges us to prefigure states (Cooper, 2017), which forces a more applied sort of answer than a simple 'yes, states are progresive' or, more typically, 'no, they aren't'. This intellectual move may feel uncomfortable: it is safer, and perhaps easier, to remain in the realms of radical refusal and criticism. In defence of it, though, we might ask: where states do *not* serve the progressive functions Cooper lists, why would we automatically assume that their dissolution

is preferable to their improvement? Efforts to rework states towards progressive ends imagines them less like Nietzsche's image of the coldest of all cold monsters and more akin to Derrida's *pharmakon* – both poison and medicine (see Dhawan, this volume). For Martin and Pierce (2012), 'there are latent residual apparatuses of the state which can be activated as part of a systematic progressive politics' (61). 'Resistance cannot and ought not abandon the state' they continue '[i]f we accept that the state is primarily a shill of neoliberalism, we cede too much' (67).

3 An Internationalist Border Abolition Programme

If states are plural and challengeable, if they can be delineated by boundaries and not borders and if the symbolic capital of states can be tactically deployed in the pursuit of abolitionist efforts, then perhaps states can be involved in border abolition, as distinct from both open borders and No Borders. Having reached this point, I am now able to flesh out the detail of how state backed border abolition might look.

In what follows, I set out one possibility for mobilising states against borders with recourse to international laws and treaties. Global migration governance is widely perceived to be weak at present (Betts, 2011, Hansen, 2011, Koslowski, 2011). As James Hampshire writes,

> There is no comprehensive international migration treaty and little by way of an institutional architecture at the global level: no United Nations agency with a mandate for migration—though the United Nations High Commission for Refugees does of course have a mandate for refugees and asylum seekers—and no multilateral forums with the ability to issue binding resolutions (2016: 571).

The approach I outline here would enrol the symbolic capital of the international legal and governmental system to unify individual states in collective action, and has the hallmarks of internationalism. I take internationalism to be a political principle, which advocates greater political or economic cooperation among nations and peoples. It has a history in both liberal and socialist movements (Hodder et al, 2015). For example, the Workingmen's International (the first of the four Internationals associated with the development of socialism) was initiated by Karl Marx and contemporaries in 1864 (Featherstone, 2012). It saw a split between the anarchists, who eschewed states, and the Marxists who advocated the seizure of states in order to establish a workers' government, which would segue to world socialism. This radical form of internationalism was mobilised in different forms during the 20th century

‘by a range of ideologically motivated actors whose objectives are connected … by their common desire to overthrow established political structures’ (Hodder et al, 2015: 3).

The principle of internationalism has underpinned various developments in international relations and law. Although currently ‘beleaguered and unfashionable’ (ibid: 3) it arguably ‘remains the best critique of “the world of states complacent in their sovereignty, inflated with pride and national conceit and prone to war and hatred”’ (Hodder et al, 2015, citing Halliday, 1988: 189).

We might highlight a range of historical internationalist movements and initiatives. Featherstone (2012), for example, recalls the spontaneous international solidarities forged between the working classes in Northern England and the anti-slavery campaigns in America in the 1860s, which had a constraining influence over then-Prime Minister Palmerston’s support for the southern pro-slavery American states, despite operating entirely outside the usual political machinery of ‘dispassionate elites’. To this bottom up example we might add more ‘top-down’ instances of internationalism, including nuclear non-proliferation agreements, the Geneva Convention, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade that paved the way for the World Trade Organisation, and the Montreal Protocol. These developments are clearly various, reflecting ‘the diverse and often uneven ways in which internationalism has been defined and deployed’ (Hodder et al., 2015), and have paved the way for a similar diversity of institutions such as the League of Nations, the International Criminal Court and the United Nations. The rapid development of international human rights laws since the Second World War can also be linked to modern internationalism. Whilst certainly not without problems, contradictions and failings (Žižek, 2006), many of these developments have not been in the immediate, narrowly defined ‘national interests’ of the states involved.

It is essential to be vigilant against the sort of internationalism that involves an ‘acceptance of the asymmetry of international relations and the necessarily dominant, neo-colonial role that rich and powerful countries have to play in enforced and policing [world orders]’ (Hodder et al., 2015). With this vigilance in mind though, within the internationalist tradition, is it possible to conceive of a process that leads towards the abolition of borders?

Consider a process of gradual, co-operative, binding abolition of state controls over migration achieved through international treaty predicated on the central tenet of the right to free

international movement[4]. Such a process could include a fund, that we can call the Global Facilitation Fund, that is internationally coordinated and is awarded to countries and areas in proportion to the rate of immigration they experience. The fund's value would increase in proportion to the agreed reduction in border control expenditures among participating countries over time.

The gradualism of this proposal is important. The distinction between gradual and sudden border abolition constitutes the third lynchpin distinction of the chapter alongside the distinctions between borders and boundaries, and abolition, open and no borders that I have already discussed. It is usual to associate border abolition with violent revolution – the overthrowing of exclusionary elites and the institution of a new form of global inclusivity. But would border abolition necessarily require a revolution? The Miriam Webster's dictionary offers two relevant definitions of revolution 1) the usually violent attempt by many people to end the rule of one government and start a new one and 2) a sudden, extreme, or complete change in the way people live and/or work. This understanding of revolution produces a *successionist* disposition. That is, in the context of border abolition, an assumption that global free movement would replace borders relatively abruptly: as one ended the other would begin[5].

The expectation of suddenness can sometimes place activist objectives out of practical reach. If activists do not aspire to sudden and complete system change then they can be figured simply as 'reformers' and important sites and practices of pre-figurative, hopeful resistance are seemingly disqualified from progressive politics. The position I am outlining here, in contrast, is that progressive, emancipatory, political struggle need not be sudden or complete, but can be composed of numerous minor acts of intervention and resistance that coalesce into a significant movement over time. This vision of large scale border liberalisation is compatible with Dummett's view (1992: 23) who advocates for a movement towards border liberalisation that is begun 'in a limited way… even if the aim [can] not be realized at once'. This view can be derived from the works of abolitionist scholars like Mathiesen (1974), and is related to various concepts in the social sciences such as 'everyday resistance' (Scott, 1987), 'tactical' progressivity (de Certeau, 2011) and 'minor' politics (Squire and Darling, 2013).

[4] For discussion of free movement as a human right see Pécoud and Guchteneire (2007).
[5] See Nyers (2013) for a discussion of the temporality of large scale border liberalisation

In order to make the programme thinkable and operable as a form of inter-governmental cooperation, it is illustrative to specify the scheme more precisely in the following way. Let T_0 be the total financial outlay on border controls globally in time period 0, and let T_x be the total financial outlay on border controls in period x. Let F_x be the total amount of funds available to the Global Facilitation Fund in year x, and let $F_0 = 0$. A preliminary relation between the two values, T_x and F_x, can be expressed by the following two equations:

1. $F_x = (x/100)*T_0$
2. $T_x = (1-[x/100])*T_0$

Accordingly, in year 0, F_0 would equal zero as per equation one. As x increases from 0 to 100 over the course of one hundred periods, the magnitude of the global facilitation fund, F_x, also increases in one percent increments, whilst the magnitude of the total amount spent on border control globally reduces at the same rate, as per equation two. In other words there is a literal diversion of the usage of funds, from border control to the facilitation of safe, global mobility, achieved gradually over one hundred periods.

Admittedly, the idea does not address capital flows and only concerns human migration. Yet, capital flows have largely decoupled themselves from the interventions of nation-states in any case. Cities on the one hand, and global circuits comprised of urban financial centres and electronic global financial markets on the other, have been able to override 'the duality global/national presupposed in much analysis of the relation between the global economy and state authority' (Sassen 2002: 2).

Innumerable variations on, and developments of, the basic idea can be envisaged. T_0 could be calculated on the basis of average expenditure per period over a predetermined window (e.g. 15 years) for instance, to avoid variability in the process of setting the figure. The process could be expedited or slowed e.g. each increment could be 3 months, 6 months, 1 year or 2 years. Breaks could be taken if the process hits obstacles, leaps could be taken if the process goes well, and reversals could be considered if the pace proves unmanageable. Regional groupings of countries could embark on the process. Countries not initially included could be incorporated later via a stipulated procedure. Countries that overspent

on border controls could be sanctioned by a fine. The behaviour of countries themselves would be subject to monitoring to ensure compliance, which itself could be organised in various ways to maintain independence.

The facilitation fund would eventually be as significant in size as the outlay on border controls is today. It could cover various costs associated with migration, including:

- Making impartial and reliable information available about the reception of migrants in destination countries. This would reduce migration based on misinformation.
- Securing the safety of those wishing to migrate, for example via a rapid response rescue organisation and the proper regulation of the current smuggling industry.
- Support for those who had migrated and who were unable to pay for basic education, healthcare or social security in destination countries.
- Research into adaptive strategies for areas of immigration (and emigration) in the emerging, more connected, global environment.
- Compensation to areas of emigration for their loss of human capital.

A series of operational questions arise, including what to do about serial migrators, whether developed and developing countries would receive the same amount of funding per migrant, how to reckon with internal migration such as the large scale migrations that both occur and are prevented from occurring in China, what to do about non-contiguous participants in the scheme, what arrangements should be in place in the event of aggression between states and how security interests would be affected. It is not possible here to do justice to all of these questions. My purpose can only be to provide a very preliminary sketch of a possible future, rather than to specify it exhaustively, but I do so in the belief that it is better to keep searching for and expressing the potential forms that an alternative global future, even an incomplete one, might take, than to be cowed into silence by the difficulty and risks of achieving it. Politics, here, is not of the sort that waits for the cataclysmic revolution to occur for so long that it 'leaves us in a fearful and fateful deadlock [and] lingers in endless postponement' (Critchley, 2009). Rather it is composed of practical, if highly demanding, interventions in the present. On this basis, it is worth considering the merits of such a scheme.

An approach such as this would address two major families of objections to multilateral border liberalisation: that of a lack of *concomitance*, meaning that states that act in isolation could be overwhelmed by the resulting in-migration of people, and a lack of attention to *contribution*, referring to the fraught politics of citizenship and entitlement of migrants to welfare, protection and social security in comparison to long-standing

residents of an area (Pécoud and de Guchteneire, 2007; Bauder, 2017). On the first point, Pécoud and de Guchteneire (2007) argue that a first principle of large scale border liberalisation must be multilateralism: 'no state can be expected to progress towards free movement' they write (p21), 'if even some other states do not follow the same path'. The process outlined here is not only gradual, meaning that it could be corrected to account for any countries overwhelmed during the process, but also collective, meaning that the international treaty would act as a coordination device to facilitate the *simultaneous* loosening of border restrictions, thereby dissipating the risk that countries acting in isolation will be 'overwhelmed' by newcomers (or perhaps, more realistically, that conservative media could convincingly talk of such a situation).

On the second point, an important property of the programme suggested here is that the facilitation fund would deliver support to migrant-receiving destinations in proportion to the immigration they received. In this way the fund would constitute a response to those states – notably, but not exclusively, in the global North (Hampshire, 2016) – that are reluctant to enter into close international cooperation on border control due to the supposed financial burden and threats to citizenship that immigration represents. Of course, we could argue the point that in reality immigration is often a positive, not a negative, economic influence on a developed receiving country, at least in the medium- to long-term. But bearing in mind the widespread existence of the *belief* that immigration is costly, the real value of the fund would be its negotiating potential with states that habitually under-estimate immigration's value. It would therefore constitute a powerful bargaining tool for initiating a new round of large-scale global migration governance.

One might ask if there would be sufficient funds to compensate the providers of healthcare, education and social security in destination states upon the arrival of migrants. It might be better to ask *when* there would be sufficient funds. What we have witnessed over the past few decades, is a steady escalation in investment in border control, driven by a variety of factors including fear of terrorism, media sensationalism, rising nationalism and vested private interests. Concomitantly we have seen a decline in the return on this investment, as i) increasing proficiency in the technological and physical avoidance of controls by migrants has developed, and ii) a decline in the costs of migration has occurred as 'technical processes have substantially reduced the costs of travel' (Collier 2013: 66). Indeed, as populations in Western developed countries have become used to receiving

migrants, migrant numbers become large enough to talk not about 'integration' of newly arrived people into a supposedly static and homogenous indigenous population but about the dynamic 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2016) of hosting countries. Under these conditions the costs per migrant of receiving migrant populations also reduces, as schools, hospitals and already-arrived diasporic communities become proficient at meeting the needs of the newly arrived. In other words, border protection is getting more expensive whilst migration is getting cheaper. This implies that there is a tipping point – it may well have already been reached (see The Economist, 2017) – at which global cosmopolitanism is cheaper than protectionism.

One way to appreciate the numbers involved is to consider current expenditure on border controls in relation to the number of expected migrants that would result from border abolition. While space constraints preclude a full analysis here, the following reflections are at least illustrative of the potential of an internationalist border abolition programme. Britain spent £1.8 billion ($3.02bn; €2.21bn[6]) on border controls in the financial year 2014/15[7]. Since Britain had a population of 64.61 million people in 2014 this equates to £27.86 ($46.80; €34.24) per person. Assuming for the moment that Britain is representative of the developed world, we can extrapolate a rough estimate of the amount that the developed world in general spends on border control by multiplying this £27.86 by the population of the developed world (1.248 billion[8]), yielding an annual expenditure of £34.77 billion ($58.41bn; €42.73bn). This exceeds an estimate from the International Organisation for Migration in 2003 that, at that time, the twenty-five richest countries collective spent $25-30 billion per year on the enforcement of immigration laws (Martin, 2003).

Now consider the World Gallup Poll on migration, which conducted interviews with over 400,000 adults in 146 countries between 2008 and 2010[9]. The survey found that '[r]oughly 630 million of the world's adults desire to move to another country permanently… if they had the chance' (Esipova et al., 2011: 21). The authors calculate that this figure equates to 14% of the world's adult population. For simplicity let us assume that 14% of children would also move if they had the chance. Taking the world population in 2014 at 7.238

[6] 2014 exchange rates used here and throughout, taken from www.poundsterlinglive.com.
[7] https://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefing-paper/348
[8] http://www.prb.org/pdf14/2014-world-population-data-sheet_eng.pdf
[9] http://news.gallup.com/poll/148142/International-Migration-Desires-Show-Signs-Cooling.aspx

billion, this gives us an estimate of 1.01 billion potential migrants in a world devoid of migration controls.

By dividing the total estimate of border outlays by the developed world by the number of people we would expect to move, we can arrive at a per capita estimate of the size of the facilitation fund upon completion of the programme: it would equate to a minimum of £34.43 ($57.84; €42.81) per migrant per year. This is a minimum both because the numerator could well be an underestimate and because the denominator is almost certainly an overestimate. With respect to the numerator, the figure Britain spends on border controls may be below average for the developed world because Britain 'benefitted' from European investment in external border controls in 2014, which we would expect to have reduced the amount that Britain spent directly. What is more, the figure excludes the outlay on border controls of developing countries, which, while less than developed countries per capita, would still be significant[10]. With respect to the denominator, not every potential migrant would actually move. It is far easier to say that one would like to migrate than it is to do so and the adjustment of wages and living standards under conditions of free movement is also likely to erode the incentive to move during the period of transition. Nevertheless, we will proceed with this conservative figure.

While £34.43 per migrant per year may not sound like a lot, it is worth bearing in mind that most migrants would migrate to countries close at hand, according to the long-established principle of distance decay that geographical models of migration have identified (Samers 2009). Since most potential migrants are also located in poor countries, then migration would largely be from one developing country to another, meaning that the facilitation fund would function as a *de facto* aid mechanism, redistributing funds from richer to poorer countries. This being the case, £34.43 must be considered not in relation to its Western purchasing power, but in relation to its power to improve education and healthcare systems in, for example, sub Saharan Africa or the poorest areas of Asia and Latin America. If the marketing material of Western charities is to be believed, £30.00 could buy clean water for 30 families[11], provide over 30 children with effective treatment

[10] Pécoud and de Guchteneire note that fifty-seven states in less developed regions had policies aimed at reducing migration as early as 2001.

[11] http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/oxfam-unwrapped/parents-and-carers/safe-water-for-50-people-ou9022wa

for malaria[12], or cover the costs of a child living in poverty to attend preschool for over half a year[13]. Bearing in mind that most migrants tend to be net contributors to their host economies anyway, the potential of the programme comes into view.

4 Challenges and Risks

It almost goes without saying that such a programme would face a gamut of challenges and risks. Perhaps the primary challenge concerns how to catalyse such a process: how could we possibly hope for such a system to come about or even get started? Border liberalisation on a global scale may appear unrealistic, but as Pécoud and du Guchteneire (2007: 2) argue,

> 'If one had told a French or a German citizen in, say, 1950, that free movement would be a reality in the European Union a few decades later, he or she may have been difficult to convince. Even in the 1980s it would have been difficult to predict that the free movement of people between Eastern and Western Europe would become normal some three decades later'.

Indeed, free movement is by no means 'an absurdity' (ibid: 25), having been discussed seriously in various regions including West Africa (Adepoju, 2007), the southern African region (Peberdy and Crush, 2007) and South America (Maguid, 2007) while the European Union has achieved high levels of free movement between states. The question remains, though: how can such a process get started?

Progressive pedagogy has historically fulfilled various functions for abolitionism. The economic irrationality of the effort to legally abolish the British slave trade in the late 1700s and early 1800s, from the perspective of British industry, underscores the achievement of the abolitionists (Drescher 2010). The major challenge they faced was the reduction of cultural and moral distance between the consumers of, and profiteers from, slave produce, and the experiences of slaves, which were largely unknown to the British public. Both female and male abolitionists during the period developed innovative pedagogic techniques to overcome this distancing[14]. A similar challenge faced the

[12] https://www.aidforafrica.org/donate/
[13] https://www.comicrelief.com/node/88
[14] Thomas Clarkson, for instance, used a chest of artefacts in his lectures against the slave trade, which he gave throughout the country for many years (Devenish, 1994).The female abolitionists developed even more far-reaching pedagogic techniques. They executed a painstaking programme of face-to-face visits to private homes, with the result that nearly a quarter of all the signatories to the anti-slavery petition to the British Parliament in 1833 were women's signatories to women's petitions. They also used imaginative writing to mobilise support such as the poems of Hannah More. They boycotted slave produce, raised funds and distributed thousands of

American scientists that discovered the negative influence of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) on the vital layer of ozone gases that protect the earth from excess ultra-violet radiation linked to skin cancer as well as damage to plant and animal life. Despite establishing the link between CFCs and depleting levels of ozone in the 1970s, staunch resistance from multinational companies heavily invested in CFCs meant that a consensus was difficult to build. Crucial to breaking the deadlock was the innovative use of time-lapse video technology that gave a compelling visual representation of the development of the 'ozone hole'. The very metaphor of a 'hole' was a key pedagogic intervention that prompted a series of influential actors, including the conservative US President Reagan (who was wholly committed to industry and generally against government intervention), to become sufficiently concerned to intervene[15].

In order to engender similar support for the abolition of border controls, a comparably well considered pedagogic arsenal would need to be amassed. Unfortunately, the persistent interest of a global-yet-nationalist, sensationalist, trivialising and exploitative media machine (Herman and Chomsky 2010), which routinely generates moral panics around migration (Cohen 2011), introduces specific contemporary challenges that will require the progressive mobilisation of innovative means of counter-visualisation in informational conditions vastly different from, and arguably even harder than, those facing the slave trade abolitionists or the scientists working to abolish CFCs. The perils of constrained migration would need to be not only systematically researched, but also innovatively represented and imparted. The experiences of migration control, including its hidden violence, would need to be relayed in ways that are empathy-building, without pitying or belittling migrant subjects, and the sheer wastefulness of arbitrary global partitioning via border control needs to find fresh expression.

In terms of risks, at least four risks of the internationalist programme outlined here present themselves. The first is the naturalisation and normalisation of the state system and the

'workbags', sewn from non-slave-produced material, which included tracts and pamphlets against the slave trade (Midgley, 2004).

[15] The result was the Montreal protocol – widely viewed as the most successful environmental Treaty – which precipitated the phased reduction in the production of CFCs globally from its inception in 1989. Currently 98% of CFC production worldwide has been phased out, and the ozone layer is regenerating and predicted to be fully restored by 2050. The protocol was the first Treaty to address a global environmental regulatory challenge. It did so via deliberative exchanges between scientists and educators on the one hand, and business people and politicians on the other, relying on illustrative pedagogic techniques to visualise and conceptualise the crisis faced.

international scale. The way the proposal is framed takes as given the primacy of states in the administration of global power, as well as taking a rather quantitative view of power itself (Agnew 2001). By doing so, it risks becoming active in the very construction of states, whilst also embodying the assumption that the 'international' is 'the most urgent scale' (Hodder et al., 2015: 2), of intervention. The notion that states are ontologically stable entities that can intervene in a pre-existing and pre-packaged scale of action, both of which remain unaffected by the means of their enactment and operationalisation, is reminiscent of the realist approach to international relations that political geographers have previously critiqued (Agnew, 2001).

Second, relatedly, without specifying the political and cultural components of the proposal (such as institutions, congresses, summits, societies, etc.), nor giving explicit attention to *who* articulates the international, and from where, the proposal could risk opening the door to the sort of colonial and imperial practices that empires have undertaken in previous epochs. How can the proposal avoid 'the global manifestation of US nationalism' (Hodder et al., 2015: 3), for instance? Featherstone's concern in his study of internationalism is precisely to locate subaltern internationalism outside the corridors of power, and by extension outside states, and to attend to the ways in which international connections are forged 'from below' (Featherstone 2012). The risk of proposing an internationalist model such as that put forward above is that it reproduces elite, Eurocentric formations of ideologies and forms of power by not grounding itself and proceeding from local relations and struggles. In order to mitigate this risk, more work would need to be carried out – not only by experts in law, policy, negotiation, economics, diplomacy, international relations, peace studies, migration and political science, but also by migrants and would-b migrants as well as activists, unions and academics – into the question of 'the relationship between internationalism in the abstract and the geographical specifics of its creation in particular sites' (Hodder et al., 2015: 4).

Third, the object of the proposal is the facilitation of markedly freer human movement, the advantages of which are now well known (see Bauder, 2017). The way that freer human movement might underpin capitalist exploitation of human societies, however, is less frequently discussed (see Gill, 2009). Salter (2013) has explicated the intimate connection between human movement and the liberal world order, including capitalism - in particular the highly lucrative security and technology sectors that regulate human movement. In his

view, the system of accumulation that is currently dominant 'simply cannot allow staticity – the entire system is premised on circulation' (Ibid: 11). In this view, is the liberalisation of borders primarily a capitalist endeavour? It is worth remembering that, precisely via their porosity and failure, borders function to admit certain precarious and vulnerable workforces, ripe for exploitation (Anderson, 2016). Certainly the scale of emigration that large areas of the world could experience (what Collier (2013) calls 'exodus') is capable of consigning these areas to under-development and subordinate positions in the emerging global order. Attention to these risks must accompany any large-scale border abolition initiative.

Fourth, if it is the case that boundary processes are so embedded in society that borders have taken on secondary importance (as per Paasi 's 1999 argument), then the proposal set out here may ultimately miss its target. The risk is that border abolition would be carried out but that such a development would nevertheless leave intact the primary mechanisms of racist and subjugatory exclusionism that now operate through alternative mechanisms. These include 'internal borders' such as 'administrative, financial, cultural, linguistic and mental barriers' (Pécoud and de Guchteneire, 2007: 24). We might, for example, witness increasing privately financed segregation, higher levels of employment and housing discrimination against newcomers, increasing gentrification, and a scaling-up of gated communities (gated cities for example). All these risks would need careful thought alongside any practical experiment into the abolition of border controls.

5 **Conclusion**

Abolitionism has never been about utopia, though. Abolitionist efforts are not about imagining some woolly, pie-in-the-sky society, but about practical, applied interventions against systems of oppression and marginalisation. A world without borders would also not be utopian (Pécoud and de Guchteneire, 2007; Bauder, 2017). Crime, discrimination, disease, inequality and exploitation would surely outlast such an initiative, but withholding support for partial and imperfect improvements on the basis that such achievements fail to live up to the demands of completeness would require us to adopt a neutered political position. Imagine not supporting the abolition of slavery because capitalism would survive such legislation. Imagine not supporting universal suffrage because of concerns about proportional

representation. Imagine not supporting LGBTI rights because the notion of human rights is flawed.

Thomas Mathieson (1974) was acutely aware of these difficulties when writing his seminal reflection on the politics of abolition. As he saw it, there arises a dilemma between two strategies. On the one hand, the refusal of short-term reforms might help to maintain an appetite for longer-term, more systemic changes, but often comes at the price of political paralysis. On the other hand, engaging in short-term reforms may afford abolitionists more political presence, but at the same time can deplete them, dilute their initiative and encourage them to settle for a system that is not fundamentally altered. The solution, for Mathieson, was to identify and support only those short-term reforms that were commensurate with, and clearly made progress towards, the longer-term objective: what he called 'reforms of the abolishing kind' (Ibid: 210). There is a strong case for viewing a one percent increment towards an abolitionist goal, as set out in the proposal above, as an abolishing kind of reform in Mathieson's terms. I will, however, leave it to readers to decide on the question of whether the abolition of borders via the sort of inter-governmental negotiation outlined here is itself a reform of the abolishing kind on the road towards the elimination of exclusionism, racism and discrimination, or simply likely to re-inscribe these in new forms.

The real challenge facing progressive politics is not the charge of political reformism, but the delicate and practical matter of assessing which battles can be fought and won within the current system of domination, and organising campaigns to do so effectively. Whether or not we would sign up to the proposal put forward here, the progressive academic's role in this landscape is fundamentally different to that of a Bartleby-esque dissenter. It is to offer constructive suggestions and critique to progressive factions, with a view to galvanising their activities and opening up new potential fields of winnable struggle. It is to attend to the future systematically, as a technician working to bring about imperfect but improved alternative worlds. Governments, multinationals, security and insurance companies, think-tanks and the military have been undertaking these practices for decades: identifying desirable futures and 'backcasting' the necessary social developments that would be required to bring such futures about (Robinson, 2003). Progressive scholars too can develop scenarios as 'a tool to think with and thereafter strategically intervene on the future' (Anderson 2010: 785).

In this respect, this chapter has sought to reimagine an alternative possible future. It has also, in a minor way, reimagined the role of the progressive academic. To theorise progressively is to move beyond both the role of critic and of reformer. This is not a space 'between' revolution and reform, but somewhere else, somewhere full of risk and potential. It is to this project that progressive scholarship invites us.

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