

# MIGRATION

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## IMMIGRATION INTO EUROPEAN WELFARE STATES: HOW CONFLICTS AND INEQUALITIES ARE (RE)PRODUCED

IMMIGRATION INTO EUROPEAN WELFARE STATES: HOW CONFLICTS AND INEQUALITIES ARE (RE)PRODUCED

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**Abstract.** Market liberalization in the EU serves as a basis for class distinctions among migrants, while restrictive immigration policies help in constructing certain immigrant culture(s) as a threat to homogeneity and welfare state solidarity.

ИММИГРАЦИЯ В ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЕ ГОСУДАРСТВА ВСЕОБЩЕГО БЛАГОСОСТОЯНИЯ: КАК (ВОС)ПРОИЗВОДЯТСЯ КОНФЛИКТЫ И НЕРАВЕНСТВА

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**Аннотация.** Либерализация рынков Европейского Союза служит основой для классовых различий мигрантов, в то время как ограничительная иммиграционная политика способствует конструированию образа определён-

Over the past few decades, the grounds for the legitimization of inequalities have shifted. Ascriptive traits (heterogeneities) have been complemented by the alleged cultural dispositions of immigrants and the conviction that immigrants as individuals are responsible for their own fate. Such categorizations start by distinguishing legitimate refugees from non-legitimate forced migrants. Another important issue is the alleged illiberal predispositions of migrants and their unadaptability to modernity. Politics and policies seem to reward specific types of migrants and refugees, exclude the low- and non-performers in the market, and reward those who espouse liberal attitudes. In brief, it is a process of categorizing migrants into useful or dispensable.

ных иммигрантских культур как угрозы однородности и солидарности государства всеобщего благосостояния. За последние несколько десятилетий основания для легитимации неравенства изменились. Аскриптивные черты (неоднородности) были дополнены предполагаемыми культурными диспозициями иммигрантов и убежденностью, что иммигранты как отдельные лица несут ответственность за свою судьбу. Дифференции начинаются с отделения законных беженцев от нелегальных вынужденных переселенцев. Другой важный вопрос — сомнения в предрасположенности мигрантов к либеральным ценностям и в их приспособленности к жизни в современной Европе. Политика и политики, по-видимому, отдают предпочтение определенным типам мигрантов и беженцев, исключают слабых и неработоспособных, вознаграждают тех, кто поддерживает либеральные ценности. Одним словом, это процесс разделения мигрантов на полезных и ненужных.

**Keywords:** welfare state, market liberalization, populism, migration, inequalities

**Ключевые слова:** государство всеобщего благосостояния, либерализация рынка, популизм, миграция, неравенство

The increased perception of growing forced migration across the world, and the influx of migrants and asylum seekers into European welfare states have placed the implications of cross-border mobility on the political agenda once again. Once cross-border migrants have made it into the territory of liberal states, there is a paradox between efforts adhering to human rights on the one hand and those controlling the migrant population on the other hand. This has been called the 'liberal paradox' [e.g. Hollifield, 2004]. Reinforced border controls and the externalization of control through 'remote control' of immigration countries in emigration countries — in the case of EU member states in North and West Africa, for example, ensures that this liberal paradox is not activated, at least not to the full [Faist, 2018a].

At first sight, this insight could also apply to what I would call the 'welfare paradox', which holds that there is a tension between social rights for all citizens in national welfare states on the one hand and the deregulation of social and labour rights and

standards as part of a liberalizing global economy on the other. One may surmise that a decrease in immigration leads to fewer forced migrants competing with established non-migrants for public services and jobs. Yet the depiction of (forced) migrants as exploiting generous welfare states and competing in labour markets does not necessarily depend on high and increasing numbers of mobile border-crossers. There is no empirical evidence that migrants have competed with non-migrants with respect to economic resources over the past three decades [Faist, 2018a].

Restrictive policies in themselves, such as trying to keep migrants from reaching the shores of Europe, harden the image of migrants as potential economic competitors. Most of the opposition to asylum-seekers in Europe nowadays comes from those authoritarian political forces who openly advocate the exclusion of “others”, for example, right-wing populist parties. In a nutshell, the externalization of control has a clear effect on the liberal paradox: if migrants do not make it into the immigration countries and/or if migrants can be expelled because their fundamental human rights can be taken care of someplace else (in countries of origin and transit), the state does not need to address politically this unwanted and unwelcomed forced migrant “surplus” population. With respect to the welfare paradox, the effects turn out to be more ambiguous. More restrictive migration control will even feed the culturalization of forced migration, defining forced migrants as the “other” and as a threat. It also leads to portraying ever more categories of asylum-seekers and migrants as illegitimate refugees and undeserving recipients of social rights.

One may suppose that, however unintentionally, remote control contributes to the securitization of migration control (that is, the perception that migrants are a security threat, physically and to the welfare state), and — very important — does not necessarily assuage the feelings of threat exploited so skillfully by various political parties and movements across Europe and North America. Moreover, as events in recent years seem to suggest, in extending control afar and thus minimizing the number of migrants arriving, the externalization strategy has not helped to convince EU member states to cooperate in the distribution of the initial costs of protecting refugees. Also, instead of living up to human rights laid down in the Geneva Refugee Convention, most European states have tightened restrictions on admission and declared most forced migrants as “economic refugees”, “bogus asylum seekers” and “illegal migrants” [Faist, 2018b].

## **Political Efforts to Address the Liberal Paradox**

European governments have engaged in strategies of migration containment, based on an enhancement of the partnership between Europe and Africa and aimed at reducing inequalities and creating enticements for migrants to stay in their countries of origin. One of the main motivations of international organizations such as the World Bank, supranational entities such as the European Union (EU), national states or (International) Non-Governmental Organizations to sponsor economic development via financial remittances of migrants is to reduce the volume of cross-border migration from the global South to the global North, for example, from Africa to Europe. Over recent years politicians across Europe have often claimed that higher levels of economic development (measured by per capita income and/or increased human development symbolized by lower infant mortality and higher rates of literacy) would eventually lead

to a decrease in international migration. What is more important, the emphasis of the EU and its Member States has been on security aspects. Their support of governments in Africa has led to securitization of migrants, meaning that routes through regions such as the Sahara have become more dangerous not only for those migrants on their way to Europe but also intra-African migrants. The Sahara, for example, has turned into a “mass graveyard” [Brachet, 2016]. This means that the routes of cross-border mobility, not only across the Mediterranean, have turned into humanitarian nightmares [cf. Cuttitta, 2017].

But even if economic development cooperation was seriously applied, there are doubts as to its consequences. The “inverted U-curve” suggests that it is not the poorest countries nor the poorest segments of the population which are the most likely to move across national borders. Migration scholars, however, insist that—while this expectation may be borne out in the long run, considering demographic transitions and economic transformations—increased economic development correlates highly with increased international migration, expressed in concepts such as the “migration hump” or the “inverted U-curve” [Martin, Taylor, 1996]. As the latter term indicates, emigration is relatively low from regions with low or high levels of income whereas it is higher in those from an intermediate range. Think of countries such as Turkey or the Philippines which are sort of middle income countries when viewed globally and which have experienced relatively high rates of out-migration over the past decades. Nonetheless, seen in the long run, this is true: higher levels of economic development work to decrease emigration rates somewhat. Although creating jobs points to an important driver of migration, it is not a panacea because it does not address the underlying root causes of cross-border migration from the global South to the global North which consists of political and economic structural inequalities. It is the continued relevance of past and present colonialism and imperialism which are setting the stage for cross-border migration from the global South to the global North.

### **Hierarchies among Migrants: Controlling Access to Social Rights**

When it comes to the European welfare states as such, there is a clear hierarchy between various types of migrants with respect to legally sanctioned access to social rights and services [Dörr, Faist, 1997; Sainsbury, 2010]. At the top tier are those migrants who are now sedentary. This is so because it usually takes a while to get full residence and employment rights for EU citizens in other member states. The second tier is composed also of EU citizens in other countries but those who could be called circular migrants. Often, the rules regulating the transfer of contributions are complex. In short, this setup favours one-time migration, not repeat migration across the borders of EU member states. In the third tier we find non-EU citizens, that is, extracommunitari who, as a rule, do not enjoy freedom of movement and have limited access to labour markets. Politically, this freedom has been rejected by critics to mean the free movement of unemployment and poverty. In the fourth and lowest tier are those who have no legal(ized) residence and or work status.

Also, language matters in the (re)production of hierarchies among these four migrant categories. The EU calls the movement of Member State citizens mobility, whereas those of third countries are deemed to constitute migration [Faist, 2013]. In a similar

way, the research literature speaks of high skilled workers of companies posting their employees abroad as expatriates and not as migrants.

Given this hierarchy of (non-)citizen access to social rights and services in the EU, it is essential to look at the underlying causes for conflicts over transnational social rights. Where social protection and migration are concerned, there is at present no prospect of harmonization of status between third-country citizens and EU citizens, because national welfare states are not prepared to relinquish control over their employment markets and social protection systems to supranational institutions.

Member states do have the ability to exercise control over individuals from third states, however. In this way, they use migration control and sometimes also naturalization policies vis-à-vis third-country nationals to regulate their respective labour markets and, hence, working conditions, wage costs and (social) citizenship.

This is easily illustrated by the example of freedom of movement for workers. Argentinians of Italian descent may adopt the citizenship of their ancestors; they then have the option of settling not only in Italy, but in any other EU member state. Survey evidence on naturalization processes in Italy finds that better opportunities for moving to other countries was the second most chosen reason for wanting to obtain Italian citizenship. In these and similar cases, other member states have no control over the mobility of workers according to citizenship. What constitutes an employee, for example, is increasingly defined and determined by the EU Commission. Member states do have the ability to exercise control over individuals from third states, however. In this way, they use migration control and sometimes also naturalization policies vis-à-vis third-country nationals to regulate their respective labour markets and, hence, working conditions, wage costs and (social) citizenship. Access to national citizenship thus becomes an indirect instrument for controlling labour markets and access to social rights.

### **Migration and the Rise of Populism in Europe: A Byproduct of Social Transformation**

Against this economic and legal background, we have been experiencing a strong form of distrust and backlash against globalization, the political and economic elites, the EU, and we have seen the rise of populism in Europe over the last years. These developments can be perceived as constituting a threat to the stability and future of the EU, but also as an opportunity to reform the Eurozone and the European Union. As we have already seen, it is not economic issues which directly drive the perception of certain migrant categories as a threat but perceived threats to imagined cultural homogeneity and ways of life. Migration thus becomes culturalized in that migrants are also rejected because of their alleged cultural otherness. One of the most important contemporary expressions of culturalization and racialization in Europe has been right-wing xenophobic populism. After all, migrants and refugees are the most visible sign of the second modern globalization and the concomitant social transformation [cf. Beck, 1992]. Anti-immigration feelings among the dominant population's electorates have been fostered and exploited by parties mobilising tensions related to growing inequalities not only in material wealth but also power between "the elites" and "the people".

Certainly, anti-immigrant and more broadly anti-minority populism is related not only to migration but also to the loss of state legitimacy and, economically, nationalist protectionist trade and currency policies. We should not forget that right-wing pop-

ulism at first sight appear as a corrective to the current market liberalizing regimes in Europe. Yet such a view is deceiving. In reality, right-wing populists are the beneficiaries of market radical, neo-liberal policies of many member state governments [Faist, 2018a]. What is worse, right-wing populist parties such as the Front National in France, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, the Lega Nord in Italy and the New Democrats in Sweden extend these same policies and couple them with nationalist, protectionist and xenophobic elements. There is no emergent left-wing populist alternative, except in nascent forms such as Podemos in Spain.

### **The Future of European Integration: New Narratives Needed**

There is no counter-narrative to the right-wing populist view of the political world other than insisting on liberal values of democracies in Europe. Nowadays, no theory represents what socialism represented for the social question in the 19th and 20th Century. In contrast to the nineteenth century, alternative scenarios for the future seem to have multiplied. Socialist and communist theories — including Marxism, anarchism, syndicalism — have been complemented by, among others, postcolonial, postnational, feminist, and postmodern perspectives.

The pluralisation of theories help us to think of the (re)production of inequalities in more complex and adequate ways. In the classic version of the social question in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, this agent clearly was a (social) class — the proletariat, in opposition to the bourgeoisie. Nowadays, even in postmodern approaches, the concern with inequalities but also with capitalism and democracy has not disappeared. Nevertheless, in order to be useful for tackling the social question of today which has both a vertical and horizontal dimensions, one has to decouple class from the previously assumed sovereignty of allegedly objective economic interests. Yet this needs to be done without dissolving it into identity politics or reducing it into a concoction of language [Eley, Nield, 2007]. In order to defend the European project and to include a stronger social dimension, we need to avoid both a single-minded focus on identity politics and policies which usually end up in “us” vs. “them” politics and a backward-oriented politics on class to the detriment of other heterogeneities.

Migration is a crucial lens through which to explore today's transnationalized social question. While mobilization along axes such as class continues, a seminal shift toward cultural heterogeneities and mobilization has occurred. This has not simply led to a displacement of class by status and cultural politics. After all, class politics is also built along cultural boundaries, such as working-class culture, or bourgeois culture. Nonetheless, the heterogeneities that are politicized in the contemporary period have somewhat shifted: cultural heterogeneities now stand at the forefront of debate and contention. Given the finding of this analysis that class inequalities is inextricably linked to those around culture, one should not speak of the declining significance of class but rather of the increasing significance of culture and status politics.

### **Conclusions: Understanding the Contemporary Conflicts around Migration**

In sum, market liberalization, expressed for example in the economic integration of the EU, serves as a basis for class distinctions among migrants, or at least reinforce them, while securitization plays upon class distinctions in the effort to culturalize

them, and constructs certain immigrant culture(s) as a threat to homogeneity and welfare state solidarity. Over the past few decades, the grounds for the legitimization of inequalities have shifted. Ascriptive traits have been complemented by the alleged cultural dispositions of immigrants and the conviction that immigrants as individuals are responsible for their own fate. Such categorizations start by distinguishing legitimate refugees from non-legitimate forced migrants. Another important trope is the alleged illiberal predispositions of migrants and their unadaptability to modernity [Triadafilopoulos, Adamson, Zolberg, 2011]. Bringing together market liberalization and culturalized securitization, the current results could be read as Max Weber's Protestant Ethic reloaded (Weber 1980): politics and policies seem to reward specific types of migrants and refugees, exclude the low- and non-performers in the market, and reward those who espouse liberal attitudes. In brief, it is a process of categorizing migrants into useful or dispensable.

The future of this dynamic arrangement is highly uncertain. What can be observed is a trend toward both a de-politicized and a politicized development of heterogeneities in European public spheres. As to trends toward de-politicization, multicultural group rights, in particular, have been contentious and criticized as divisive. What we have seen is a displacement of multicultural language for a semantic of diversity or even super-diversity in market-liberal thinking and a semantic of threat in nationalist-populist rhetoric. Given this background, it is possible that market liberalization has also contributed to the decline of a rights-based approach and the rise of a resource-based approach. With specific regard to culture, we have seen a shift in policies from group rights to individual resources which can be tapped for enterprises, especially in the private sector. Incidentally, this has had implications for the transnational realm as well. For example, the World Bank has for years propagated a resource-based approach to link migration to development in casting migrants as development agents of their countries of origin through financial remittances [Faist, 2008].

While a de-politicization of cultural heterogeneities through diversity management may help to achieve partial equalities in organizations, multicultural policies are strongly linked to national projects. After all, such policies are meant to foster national integration and the social integration of immigrants as minorities into national life. Nonetheless, not only social rights but also cultural rights have been increasingly cast by international organizations as human rights which have a global reach but have to be implemented by national states to become effective. From all we know these policies are likely to remain the chief target of securitizing and xenophobic efforts. While the rhetorical criticism of multiculturalism is ever mounting and its rhetoric is pushed back by "liberal nationalism" [Levey, 2001], existing multicultural policies are not reversed to the same extent. This means that the political struggle is on-going.

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