

The Racialization of Security: Ethnic Minorities in Europe, International Relations and Comparative Politics

Terri E. Givens
Department of Government
University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station, A1800
Austin, TX 78712
512-232-7245
tgivens@austin.utexas.edu

Abstract

In the academic literature, race is rarely considered an important factor in the study of international relations (IR). The fields of IR as well as comparative politics (CP) have also been reluctant to view immigration as an important factor in understanding relations between nations and domestic politics, despite large flows of people moving from the developing world to the developed world. Immigration is often overlooked as a major component of both economic and national security. Much is made of capital flows, trade agreements, treaties and military action in the broader scheme of international relations, however, the flow of people, particularly people from a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds, has always played a key role in international relations. Immigration and race touch on issues not only of racism and ethnic conflict, but also of labor movements, relations with developing countries, demographics, economic growth, and a variety of factors that impact international relations and domestic politics. In this article, I discuss why the issues of race and immigration need to play a more central role in the analysis of politics, particularly in Europe.

Keywords

Race, International Relations, Europe, Politics, Immigration

“The immigration-race ‘problem’ has perplexed the leaders of both France and Britain...it has nevertheless been troublesome, relatively unamenable to solution, potentially very serious, and always festering under the surface of the political routine.” Freeman 1979, 308.

Introduction

In the academic literature, race is rarely considered an important factor in the study of international relations (IR).¹ The fields of IR as well as comparative politics (CP) have also been reluctant to view immigration as an important factor in understanding relations between nations and domestic politics, despite large flows of people moving from the developing world to the developed world. Immigration is often overlooked as a major component of both economic and national security. Much is made of capital flows, trade agreements, treaties and military action in the broader scheme of international relations, however, the flow of people, particularly people from a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds, has always played a key role in international relations. Immigration and race touch on issues not only of racism and ethnic conflict, but also of labor movements, relations with developing countries, demographics, economic growth, and a variety of factors that impact international relations and domestic politics. In this article, I discuss why the issues of race and immigration need to play a more central role in the analysis of politics, particularly in Europe.

Political science (particularly in the U.S.) has not played a major role in examining the role of race in the European context, yet these issues are undeniably

¹ There is also a dearth of minority scholars in the field of International Relations, but it is difficult to get actual numbers, given the lack of data on faculty in general.

political in nature. Issues of race and politics have come to the forefront in the study of American politics since the 1960s and the Civil Rights movement.² Throughout its history, race has often been at the center of policy debates in the United States, but Americans rarely think of Europe as a place where race is an issue. Events like the riots in Paris in 2005 and 2007 are often seen as “Muslim” riots, rather than anything similar to the “ghetto uprisings” that occurred during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. However, it is important to keep in mind that race and ethnicity have long played a role in the history, politics and in particular conflicts in Europe.

Authors such as Frank Füreidi, R.J. Vincent, and Randolph Persaud have all attempted to bring the issue of race into the realm of international relations. In his 1998 book,³ Füreidi examines the influence of race and racial thinking during the 20th century, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon context of the United States and Britain. In 1982 R.J. Vincent wrote that “The difficulty with the rejection of the concept of race is that it would afford us no purchase on the popular notion of race as part of everyday belief and experience, and therefore a piece of political data whether we like it or not.”⁴ In his 2002 analysis of race in international relations, Persaud, in citing work by Roxanne Lynn Doty, finds that in a “survey of five leading IR journals spread over some fifty years, only a handful of articles have been published on race and international relations.”⁵ Füreidi notes that, “Despite their prevalence during the first three decades of the twentieth century,

² For a review, see Hutchings, Vincent L. and Nicholas A. Valentino. 2004. “The centrality of Race in American Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7: 383-408.

³ Füreidi, Frank. 1998. *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

⁴ Vincent, R.J. 1982. “Race in International Relations,” *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn, 1982), p. 660.

⁵ Persaud, Randolph B. 2002. “Situating Race in International Relations” in *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender and Class* edited by Geeta Chowshry and Sheila Nair, New York: Routledge, p. 59.

racial fears have rarely been the subject of serious social analysis. One reason for this important gap in the literature may be that the strident and extreme form of racism has obscured the anxieties that inspired the fear. The aggressive discourse of racial thinking can mask the profound anxieties that underpin it. Indeed, the very development of racial thinking reflected a conservative commitment to preserve the power relations.”⁶ This fear of racial conflict and the desire to maintain power impacted not only the discourses around race, but also the study of race. These fears can also be seen today in the discourses surrounding the rise of populist radical right parties in Europe and the Tea Party in the United States.

Immigration has also been marginalized in IR, although the number of articles on immigration in IR journals seems to be increasing in recent years, based on anecdotal evidence. There is a strong connection between immigration and race which connects, in particular, to issues of identity and security. In connecting race to immigration, Persaud argues that “The control of borders through immigration policy has been and continues to be the official instrument used to achieve what I would like to call *civilizational sovereignty*.”⁷ Although Persaud does not go on to elaborate on this concept, civilizational sovereignty can be considered the approach which many developed countries have taken as immigration from the developing world (mostly ethnic minorities) has increased over time. Once it became clear that most immigrants, who had mainly been recruited as temporary workers, were there to stay, policy makers began to look at ways to integrate these workers and avoid racial conflict. With family reunification, it became clear that these populations would grow, and concerns were

⁶ Füredi 1998, 26.

⁷ Persaud 2002, 59.

shifted to assimilating the immigrants into the dominant culture and away from multiculturalism.⁸

Race and color are often connected to particular attributes of immigrants. For example, as Persaud argues “Being a native speaker of Spanish in the United States is almost tantamount to having a certificate of low status...Spanish in itself is not the problem for the nativists.”⁹ However, other immigrants who speak other languages, such as Hindi speaking Indians are often considered “model minorities” and Persaud finds that this is “Because their *attribute in dominance* is constructed around science and technology. They are hi-tech Indians!”¹⁰

Another factor which is equally important for attitudes toward immigrants is religion, particularly Islam. In many ways, European responses to race and religion are similar to the situation around whiteness in the United States and towards Asians and Catholics, in the early 1900s. Füredi notes that in the late “it is difficult to understand that early in the twentieth century race was a source of public pride for the Anglo-American elite...”¹¹ but that attitude seems to have resurfaced in the 21st century. Today it is not the case that race, *per se*, is a source of pride, but rather that culture or civilization has become the source of pride, as seen in recent discussions around national identity in Britain and France. Füredi goes on to argue “a sense of defensiveness is palpable in early twentieth-century literature on race, revealing anxieties about the future. These apprehensions were expressed in a variety of forms – concern with racial fitness, with

⁸ Givens, Terri E. 2007. “Immigration and Immigrant Integration in Europe: Empirical Research” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Volume 10, June 2007.

⁹ Persaud 2002, 64.

¹⁰ Persaud 2002, 64.

¹¹ Füredi 1998, 1.

comparative fertility rates, the problem of decadence and morale decline.”¹² Many of these same concerns have been leveled at immigrants, particularly those from Muslim countries.

In the next section, I begin by examining how race in Europe has been handled in the literature, and the issues that arise from the problematic of race, that can also be translated to the issue of Islam in Europe, although it has its own pathologies related to conflict in the Middle East and terrorism. I then examine the issue of immigration and security, and conclude with a discussion of the convergence of these issues.

Race (and Religion) in Europe

The study of race politics in Europe is inextricably bound with immigration. The terror attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent Madrid and London bombings have also led to an emphasis on immigration and religion, particularly the growth of Islam in Europe. The growth of ethnic minority groups in the last 50 years in Europe is directly related to immigration flows. These flows are dependent on colonial histories, and the nature of the work forces recruited in the post-war economic boom. These flows are also related to international relations and asylum policies. What is consistent across all of these countries, however, is the fact that they are or have become multi-ethnic societies and multiculturalism has become a catchword for attempting to integrate these groups into societies that may be resistant to their inclusion.¹³ It is important to note that new arrivals are not the only targets of discrimination. Many ethnic groups have lived in these

¹² Füredi 1998, 27.

¹³ Ireland P. 2004. *Becoming Europe: Immigration, Integration and the Welfare State*. Pittsburgh, PA: Univ. Pittsburgh Press.

countries for generations and national minorities, such as the Roma, have faced discrimination for centuries.

The issue of race has been difficult in the European context, particularly because of the history of the Holocaust. However, race and religion have come to the fore as countries have begun to see immigrants as a threat to national identity. This is similar to the U.S. response to immigrant integration in the early 1900s as noted above. However, in the case of Europe, the situation is also complicated by the fact that immigrants were considered temporary until the 1980s and family reunification led to a shift from mainly single males being the focus of immigration to entire families.

The French case is illustrative of some of the issues arising from the experience of genocide in World War II. French social scientists Valerie Amiraux and Patrick Simon note that studies of racism in France “remained marginalized in the academic ‘field’ until the early 1990s” (Amiraux and Simon 2006, 191). The collection of racial statistics has become a hot topic in France with researchers like Patrick Simon arguing for the need to face up to indirect discrimination by collecting data that would allow researchers to test for group discrimination.¹⁴ The British case is nearly the opposite of France, in that “there is now a massive catalogue of publications on [immigration and race relations].”¹⁵ Britain was also an early adopter of “race relations” policies that focus on antidiscrimination policies for ethnic minorities. Those policies impacted the development of antidiscrimination policies at the EU level.¹⁶

¹⁴ Simon, Patrick. 2008. French Politics, Culture & Society, Volume 26, Number 1, Spring, pp. 7-31(25)

¹⁵ Small and Solomos 2006, 249.

¹⁶ Givens, Terri E and Rhonda Evans Case. 2014. *Legislating Equality: The Politics of Antidiscrimination Policy in Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Germany's history of the Holocaust and the country's ethnicity-based citizenship has made the issue of race a difficult topic. It wasn't until the late 1990s that Germany politicians (particularly from the conservative Christian Democrats) were willing to admit that Germany was a country of immigration. Citizenship policies were changed which allowed more immigrants, particularly Turks, to naturalize and take on Germany citizenship at birth. However, I have encountered many public officials in Germany who still consider issues around immigrant integration and discrimination "new" issues that they find difficult to manage.

Although racism is often based on color in Europe, it is also important to look at issues of cultural racism.¹⁷ As Muslims have become more defined as a group, rather than as part of their respective nationalities and ethnicities, they have become the focus of restrictive immigration policies, punitive integration measures and citizenship tests designed to test for "anti-liberal" values. Although much attention goes to the issue of Muslims in Europe, many groups face issues of racism and political exclusion. Anti-Semitism continues to be an issue in Europe, despite the history of the Holocaust and efforts to recover from that period of genocide. The basis for discrimination is often perceived race, as well as religion and culture.

As authors like Foner (2005) and Modood (2005) note, "immigrants are more likely to be stigmatized on the basis of culture than of color-coded race" (Foner 2005, 216). Foner also notes "In Fredrickson's conceptualization of racism, culture and even religion can become essentialized to the point that they can serve as a functional

¹⁷ Modood, Tariq. 2005. *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 7.

equivalent of biological racism – culture, put another way, can do the work of race, when peoples or ways of life are seen as unchangeable as pigmentation” (Foner 2005, 216).

Race, Immigration and Security

Immigration is a very complex issue which impacts state sovereignty in a variety of ways. It touches on issues including ethnic conflict, labor movements, relationships between developed and developing countries, capital flows, and a variety of other factors that impact international relations. Despite this range of issues, security discussions often focus on capital flows, trade agreements, treaties and military action in the broader scheme of international relations. However, the flow of people, particularly people from a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds, has always played an important role in international relations, including security issues in particular, and therefore should be directly addressed.

In academic literature, there has been a new (or perhaps *renewed*) focus on immigration as a security issue since the terror attacks of 9/11, the London subway bombings, and the Madrid train bombings. This includes two volumes, *Immigration Policy and Security*, edited by Givens, Freeman and Leal, and *Immigration, Integration and Security* by Ariane Chebel D’Appolonia and Simon Reich. Authors in these books find that 9/11 did not actually trigger the securitization of immigration; rather, many of the measures put in place were planned prior to the terror attacks.

The impact of 9/11 on immigrants, however, is clearly a result of the securitization of immigration. Givens, Freeman and Leal note:

The American response to terrorism imposed more costly measures on migrants than have been seen in the other settler societies or in most parts of Europe. The attack on the Twin Towers clearly derailed what would have almost certainly

been a major expansion and liberalization of American immigration law that the Bush administration had promised President Vicente Fox of Mexico.¹⁸

It was expected that the new Bush policy would have included guest worker programs, at a minimum, and many legislators called for legalization programs. However, these issues were not completely removed from the agenda post-9/11. Despite the fact that security was the main focus of U.S. immigration policy after 9/11, attempts were made at passing comprehensive immigration reform. However, the legislation that attempted to deal with the flows of undocumented immigrants stalled in Congress, while measures for controlling the border passed.

In Immigration, Integration and Security, Chebel D'Appollonia and Reich point out:

The purported transatlantic divide shrinks if we examine the commonalities on this issue. Politicians on both sides of the Atlantic seize upon the images of rioting youth, human and drug traffickers, and terrorists. They do this to generate domestic support for the securitization of immigration policies, intent as they are on patching holes in the fabric of their civil societies. Their policy prescriptions are somewhat varied but nevertheless predictable: the consistent coercive themes invoked are to secure the borders and to expel or incarcerate illegal, criminal, or suspect migrants. This coercive response is coupled with the demand that those in residence throw off their headscarves, swear allegiance to the governing authority and accept the values of the postmodern societies in which they now live.¹⁹

This coercive approach, as the authors describe, has focused to a great extent on integration policy in Europe. Borders were certainly a concern in Europe, and many measures focused on controlling entry by requiring immigrants to meet certain requirements in order to maintain legal status. As Sergio Carrera notes:

Integration is increasingly being transformed into a one-way process in which the responsibilities or duties are placed exclusively on the

¹⁸ Givens, Terri E., Gary P. Freeman and David L. Leal. 2009. *Immigration Policy and Security: U.S., European and Commonwealth Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, p. 3.

¹⁹ Chebel d'Appollonia, Ariane and Simon Reich. 2008. *Immigration, Integration and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 4-5.

immigrant's side. The non-nationals are forced 'to integrate' in order to have access to a secure juridical status and to be treated as members of the club... Integration thus becomes the non-territorial (functional or organizational) border defining the 'inside' and the 'outside', who is in and how is out, who has rights and who has only obligations.²⁰

The policies which Carrera highlights point to the creation of non-territorial borders in Europe, while the U.S. has placed more emphasis on physical borders. Of course, this can be partially attributed to the fact that the U.S. has a roughly 2,000-mile long border with Mexico, a developing nation; but it is important to note the lack of emphasis in the U.S. on integration policy as compared to Europe.

In another perspective on post-9/11 immigration policy, Christopher Rudolph's 2006 book *National Security and Immigration* emphasizes the role of security in the development of immigration policy. He discusses how the securitization of immigration has been always been an issue for states, particularly since the increase of immigration after World War II. He argues that "Policy is then modeled as primarily a function of threat perception and whether threats are most acutely felt originating externally (geopolitics) or internally (domestic politics)."²¹ This approach can help to explain differences in emphasis in the United States and Europe. Although Rudolph argues that countries look both internally and externally, one can argue that the general approach in European countries is more internal, while the U.S approach is more external.

Another factor which plays into decision making on immigration and integration policy is the fact that both the U.S. and Europe need access to high- and low-skilled workers. As noted above, economic security is an important component of national

²⁰ Carrera, Sergio. 2006. "A Comparison of Integration Programmes in the EU: Trends and Weaknesses" CHALLENGE Papers, No. 1/March 2006, p.6.

²¹ Rudolph, Christopher. 2006. *National Security and Immigration: The United States and Western Europe Since 1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 9.

security, and immigrants are needed on both sides of the Atlantic for continued economic growth. In addition to this, European countries have to factor in considerations based on demographic trends, as much of Europe is aging, and populations are declining.

Ultimately policy has to balance economic needs with security needs, both of which are in the national interest.²²

These overlapping goals of security and economic growth come into conflict at times, as in after the 9/11 terror attack, when Latino migrants were negatively impacted by new policies. As Waslin has shown... There was clearly a disparate impact for Latino migrants, which were clearly related to their ethnicity, but also the size of the Latino/a immigrant community.

When it comes to security issues, particularly related to terrorism, or border security, it is important to keep in mind how race and immigration issues come into play in policy making and as shown in the examples described above, the characterization of the potential threats. It is not surprising that scholars may shy away from directly confronting the racialization of security issues, but it is an important component in understanding some developments. Often the focus has been on the securitization of immigration, as seen in several of the works described here. However, it is also important to turn that construction around and consider the racialization of security.²³

²² Rosenblum, Marc R. 2009. "Immigration and U.S. National Interests: Historical Cases and the Contemporary Debate" in *Immigration Policy and Security: U.S., European and Commonwealth Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

²³ This racialization of security is also seen in criminality, where ethnic minorities dominate the prison populations in places like France, Britain and the U.S.

Conclusion

Europe clearly faces a dilemma, as it attempts to recover from one of the worst fiscal crises in the last 50 years. In order to maintain populations and increase economic growth, these countries will clearly need immigrants. However, concern surrounding the integration of immigrants comes partially from fear that immigrants will “swamp” the native population and destroy their culture, as well as security concerns, particularly from Islamic fundamentalism. Rather than penalize immigrants for their different race, religion and culture, security requires that immigrants be incorporated into their adopted communities so that they will be more likely to support the government rather than undermine it. It will be important for European governments to move beyond the simplistic formulas that have dominated recent changes in integration policy. The profiles of recent terrorists, particularly in France and Britain, have shown that integration does not necessarily lead to the avoidance of extremism. Despite these cases, it is clear that immigrants and their children who are incorporated into the work force and social structure are less likely to actually become that threat.

The politics surrounding immigrant integration have clearly been impacted by security concerns, which are leading to the creation of non-territorial borders between immigrants and citizens. This also leads to a definition of threat that tends to be coded by race and religion. Governments need to be careful that they aren't creating new categories of immigrants who fall outside of the non-territorial borders while remaining in the country with uncertain status. This can lead to human rights abuses and ultimately undermine, rather than increase, security.

Antidiscrimination policy can also play an important role in avoiding the pitfalls that can come from stigmatizing an entire group.²⁴ Despite a long history of colonialism, slavery, immigration and ethnic conflict in Europe, antidiscrimination policy only recently gained the attention of policy makers in France and Germany. While Britain has had a long history of “race relations” policy, Europe more generally did not follow the lead of its Anglo-Saxon allies. It was not until 1999, with the Treaty of Amsterdam, that the European Council empowered the European Commission to "take appropriate action to combat discrimination" based upon "racial or ethnic origin," among other grounds. The passage of the European Union’s Racial Equality Directive (RED) was an important step in acknowledging issues of racial discrimination. The RED was largely driven by calls for greater social cohesion and solidarity, however a key factor was concern over the rise of racist, anti-immigrant political parties like Joerg Haider’s Freedom Party in Austria.²⁵ In this case, the threat came from the far right and the left responded with a major policy initiative that had the potential to improve the situation for ethnic minorities.

It is clear that more work needs to be done in studying the impact of race, immigration and security concerns on politics. Europe’s adoption of the RED is one clear example where these three factors played an important role in the passage of an EU directive which has broad implications for immigrant integration. As European immigration policy shifts its focus away from low-skilled to high-skilled labor, how will these changes impact attitudes toward immigrants and relations with sending states? Recent EU efforts to create development partnerships with sending countries are another

²⁴ Givens, Terri E. and Rhonda Evans Case. 2014. *Legislating Equality: The Politics of Antidiscrimination Policy in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁵ Givens and Evans Case 2014.

example where researchers' understanding of attitudes toward former colonies and neo-colonialism will be important to understand the processes and outcomes of these negotiations. Many important political questions related to immigration and immigrant integration policy must be considered and examined in the context of race, religion and security concerns.

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