

International migration posing challenges to state sovereignty politics essay



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To assess whether international migration affects state sovereignty, this essay defines 'sovereignty', followed by a brief description of the contradictory cosmopolitanist and communitarianist views. Regarding the latter, this essay refers to a realist, state-centered approach, with the subsequent sections determining the notions of 'international migration', 'citizenship' and 'identity'. Moreover, it focuses on the impact and implications of globalization referring to the supervision and closure of American-Mexican borders, highlighting the territorial threat and measures taken to counter illegal migration. Finally, this essay will use the French ban of the veil to argue the possible existence of a cultural and social danger of migration, as well as governments' attempts to prevent severe changes in their nation.

The notion 'sovereignty' comprises of domestic, interdependent and legal elements, including recognition by other states, capability of governments to regulate the transnational flow of commodities, investments and people along with 'the autonomy of domestic authority structures' (Krasner, 2001, p. 2). Nation-states consist of secured territories and a central administration, while citizens remain loyal to them as the sole provider of legal, political and economic factors, providing welfare, education and protection (a) Linklater, 1996, p. 82, 83). Only sovereign states can negotiate on behalf of their people, by signing treaties, regarding their territory, resources and national self-interests (Heller and Sofaer, 2001, p. 27; Krasner, 2001, p. 1). Moreover, states possess 'monopoly over the legitimate crossing of borders' and the 'sovereign right to designate who are citizens...'

(Guild, 2009, p. 11). Hence, it is the state's 'duty (to) control both security and migration' (Guild, 2009, p. 3).

Cosmopolitans challenge the classical notion of sovereignty, believing in a global community, without defined territories; a 'borderless world' (Ohmae in Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. 17). Boundaries of political communities are expanded, placing everyone 'on equal terms', attempting to achieve identical distribution without 'major territorial discrepancies' with the establishment of fluidity of people, information and goods (a)Linklater, 1996, p. 88; b)Brown, 2001, p. 121, 127). Political identity and national citizenship lose significance in this universalist perspective; cosmopolitans claim that identity roots in common values, rather than national politics with people owing obligations towards the rest of the world (b)Brown, 2001, p. 120; Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. 24; Steans, et. al, 2010, p. 47). Advocates of cosmopolitan democracy argue that nation-states are less capable of solely managing their domestic economy, resulting in loss of control of the world economy; nation-states 'wither away' (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1999, p. 202; Held, 1997, p. 233). Communitarians critique this 'utopian' standpoint, arguing that states continue to protect their sovereignty, while refusing to abandon 'the right to self-government across diverse matters' (Held, 1997, p. 230). Based on Brenner's analysis, this theory suggests that:

'territory plays a formative role in explaining what makes the world hang together, not only in the international, but also in the economic, sociological, anthropological, geographic and historical sense' (Lapid, 2001, p. 8).

Communitarians believe that state borders are needed for defining citizenship and identity (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. 24; Lapid, 2001, p. 7).

(International) Migration, a process since the history of mankind, includes the movement within a country as well as across domestic borders (Guild, 2009, p. 10). Current international migration affects most countries simultaneously, altering the nations concerned (Castle and Davidson, 2000, p. 9; Kim, 2010, p. 900). Linklater argues that mass migration is turning societies into multi-ethnic spheres, forming complex webs of social, economic, political and cultural modifications (a), 1996, p. 84). Despite the negative effect of migration on national economies, for instance on aspects of welfare, it is vital to acknowledge the financial benefit that economic migration brings to the sending as well as receiving country (Moses, 2006, p. 105, 106).

Nevertheless, if free human mobility throughout the world were permitted, massive migration from poor to rich countries might occur. The immediate aftermath would be detrimental; the numerous migrants would change local and political arrangements, undermine national sovereignty and cause economical 'brain drain' in the leaving countries, hence the entire political and economical system would collapse (Moses, 2006, p. 108, 123, 137).

Walker argues that migration can be seen as a 'threat to social cohesion, while more specific labour migration can be defined as a social as well as economic security threat' (Guild, 2009, p. 26, 153). Sidwick claims that 'open borders would lead to the corruption of domestic culture and politics' and that state-governments remain vital to secure their society's internal unity, culture and domestic policies (Beitz, 1983, p. 594, 600). The extent

which sovereign states are affected by these factors relies on their power and effectiveness, not on their authority (Boli, 2001, p. 59).

Nonetheless, many scholars refer to globalization as a threat to the autonomy of nation-states. Linklater argues that this process confronts the 'exclusionary nature of sovereignty and...traditional ideas about citizenship' (a), 1996, p. 78). Globalization consists of the

countries' interdependence due to the flow of investment, trade and migration across political frontiers as a result of modern transport and communication technology. Subsequently, the 'boundaries between domestic matters and global affairs can become increasingly blunted' (Held and McGrew, 2001, p. 135). However, these factors create new ethnic, cultural and political forms of resistance. In attempt to secure national values, economy and population monitoring, developed states restrict the flow of migration (Moses, 2006, p. 8). Host citizens are aware of how immigrants affect their local culture, and fear potential challenges to their security, wealth and sense of community (Moses, 2006, p. 137, 176). Hence, citizens have been willing to apply political and military measures to keep immigration to a minimum (Moses, 2006, p. 137). The illegal immigration between the U. S. and Mexico, whose borders recently became militarized, proves this claim. According to the 2002 Current Population Survey, Mexico is the largest source of undocumented immigration to the U. S.; the latter being the global leading immigrant country (Passel, 2004; Huntington, 1997, p. 39). It is estimated that annually between 400, 000 and 1 million undocumented migrants try to cross the border (HomelandSecurity). The

main reason for this large scale immigration is the annual per-capita income <https://assignbuster.com/international-migration-posing-challenges-to-state-sovereignty-politics-essay/>

gage between the nations, a difference of \$24, 000 (HomelandSecurity). Legal and illegal immigration, in conjunction with the ' high birth rates of some immigrant groups', change the ethnic and cultural face of America (Huntington, 1997, p. 32). In 2005, the proposal to build a 2, 000-mile security fence, increasing the number of checkpoints and U. S. border patrols, preventing entry of illegal immigrants, was favoured and approved by the majority of Americans (HomelandSecurity). Hence, it has become increasingly difficult to cross the borders unnoticeably, causing hundreds of deaths every year.

This control leads to the discussion about citizenship, symbolizing the belonging of an individual to a democratic nation-state (Fukuyama, 2007). National identity is socially constructed around the nation's history, symbols, culture and traditions and is a ' psychological process through which individuals construe part of their self-concept' (Tajfel in Staerklé and Sidanius 2010, p. 496; Fukuyama, 2007). National membership is proven by birth certificates and refers to the ' politics of recognition' (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. vii; a)Linklater, 1996, p. 93). Moreover, citizens possess various social, civil and political rights and duties towards their state; including obligations to the law, the right to vote and payment of taxes. Hence, ' citizenship' considers all inhabitants as equal (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. 1). Nonetheless, this sense of belonging simultaneously neglects specific ethnic groups and implies inclusion as well as exclusion, leading to deprivation of legal, social and political rights of certain minorities (Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. 10; a)Linklater, 1996, p. 78, 89). Despite ' cross-national' identities, political, social and cultural tensions appear

(Castles and Davidson, 2000, p. 9). Additionally, ' the uniqueness of national identities appears to be challenged by' the fluidity of people, culture and goods (Moses, 2006, p. 176). Migration demands citizens to pose the question ' who are we?'; hence reinforcing national identity, the ethnic ' we' (Fukuyama, 2007; Brown, 2008, p. 779). Huntington argues that national identity creates national interests, while these normally ' combine security and material...moral and ethical concerns' (1997, p. 28, 35). In every nation-state, the preservation of the local culture and tradition jointly with autonomy and independence are pursued; an aim claimed to be threatened by mass-migration (b)Linklater, 2008, p. 549). As a result, immigrants are welcomed if they work rather than receive welfare or change the host's culture (Fukuyama, 2007).

Migration leads to multiculturalism, which is part of the majority of democratic states; it demands ' tolerance of cultural diversity'; hence denying the existence of a shared culture (Fukuyama, 2007; Huntington, 1997, p. 33). The question whether nation-states should welcome changes and adopt certain new values which otherwise might clash with national characteristics arises. The French Senate approved almost unanimously the bill, enforced in 2011, imposing a ban on wearing a full veil in public, supporting the assumption, that most host states and their ruling national identity feel threatened by immigration (BBC, 2010; Huntington, 1997, p. 33). This ban concerns approximately 2, 000 women, who must pay a penalty of €150 or pass a ' citizenship course' if they break the law, while a €30, 000 fine or a one-year prison sentence will be imposed on men who force their wives to wear the veil (BBC, 2010; Davies, 2010). The government

justified the bill as a policy of integration with the veil having ‘ threats to women’s rights and the secular nature of the state’ (BBC, 2010). Former Justice Minister Alliot-Marie argued that ‘ the full veil dissolves a person’s identity in that of a community.

It calls into question the French model of integration, founded on the acceptance of our society’s values’ (Euronews, 2010; Davies, 2010). The full Islamic veil ‘ is not welcome’ in France (Sarkozy in Davies, 2010). In lieu, immigrants can ‘ destabilize host countries by changing ethnic balances, exacerbating social and economic problems, and disrupting notions of political and cultural identity’ (Doty, 1998, 76).

Having defined ‘ sovereignty’, this paper covered polarized groups of cosmopolitans and communitarians. Building its arguments on realist assumptions, international migration and globalization is perceived by many states as a threat to their social collectivity and economy, while changing various aspects of nations. Nevertheless, states endeavour to remain sovereign, controlling their national identity, interests, citizenship and society by focusing on integrity, shared traditions and values. As a result, nation-states take measures to restrict the flow of migration out of fear of external influence.

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