

History of immigration in france history essay



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As a nation France has historically attracted migrants from both within and outside of Europe over the centuries. During the nineteenth century migrants flowed into France from neighbouring countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Poland, encouraged by the regular opportunities for employment. A significant increase in immigration is evident as France began to rapidly industrialize in the 1850's and the sudden demand for labour that was created by economic expansion and industrial growth could not be met internally. This process continued and increased in scale during the latter 1800's and 1900's during which time France emerged as a major industrial power. In 1851 foreigners accounted for around 1% of the total population; by the mid-1880s, this had trebled to nearly 3%. Both during and after the First World War France continued to actively recruit foreign workers for its munitions factories and to help resolve its domestic labour shortage once the war had ended. Immigration reached a peak around the early 1930s after which point, economic depression led to a major decrease in the overall number of foreign workers. Some left willingly as the labour market contracted, whilst others were forcibly removed.

By the late 1950s and 1960s, as the economy recovered, the French Government once again recognised the need for immigrants to assist with France's economic reconstruction. France relied upon migrant workers to meet labour shortages and take up low-paid jobs that French nationals were reluctant to accept. Initially French politicians and planners intended to meet France's need for labour by encouraging European immigrants to settle in preference to those from the Third World. However, growing levels of prosperity in Europe meant that less and less Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese

etc. were attracted to France. The shortfall was met instead by migrants from France's colonies and former colonies in North Africa and South-East Asia. As in Britain, colonialism created the most effective channel for labour migration into France. As a major colonial power, France could enlist a potential workforce from its colonies and protectorates, particularly the Maghreb (North-West Africa: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). By the middle of the 1950s those from the Maghreb region were the most significant group of immigrants moving into France. The vast majority of these were from Algeria, one of the most important members of the French colonial empire. However, immigration from the Maghreb was different in that unlike pre-war immigrant populations who were almost entirely male, those from the Maghreb began to bring their families over to settle in France too. From the 1970s onwards France witnessed the increase in women from other countries moving to France to join their husbands or their fathers to form family units. These employees were also frequently the first to be laid off in the 1980's as the economy again slowed down.

Perhaps in part due to its position as an island, Britain's significant immigration history is similar though much shorter. Throughout the 19th century census records identify a small but regular trickle of immigrants from all over Europe. Immigrants from further afield were generally part of the slave trade and would not be identified in any census. In 1833, Parliament finally banned all slavery across the British Empire and its abolition meant a virtual halt to the arrival of black people into Britain, at the same time as immigration from Europe was increasing, though not significantly. During the two world wars, hundreds of thousands of men from

across the Empire fought for Britain. India alone provided 1.3 million soldiers to fight in the First World War, 138,000 serving on the Western Front. During the Second World War, almost 60,000 British merchant seamen came from the sub-continent. Some of the men stayed in Britain during the inter-war years, forming small communities in ports. At that time there were no clear rules on immigration but the British establishment did not seem overly enthusiastic.

At the end of the Second World War there were labour shortages in Britain, and the government began looking again towards immigrants to fill that gap. Some 157,000 Poles were the first groups to be allowed to settle in the UK, partly because of ties made during the war years. They were joined by Italians but it was not enough to meet the need. Many men from the West Indies had fought for Britain in the war and their sense of patriotism, coupled with the need to find work, steered them towards the UK. Despite an apparent official reluctance to allow immigration from the shrinking empire, the government needed these men to join its depleted workforce. As mass immigration continued in the 1950s, so did the rise of racial violence and prejudice in the UK. Until then, legislation had allowed people from the Empire and Commonwealth unhindered rights to enter Britain as they held British passports. Under political pressure, the government legislated three times in less than a decade to make immigration for non-white people harder and harder. By 1972, legislation meant that a British passport holder born overseas could only settle in Britain if they, firstly, had a work permit and, secondly, could prove that a parent or grandparent had been born in the UK. In practice, this meant children born to white families in the remnants of the

Empire or the former colonies could enter Britain whilst their black counterparts could not.

So it can be seen that historically, immigration into both Britain and France shares the same roots in terms of being vital to the workforce and development of both countries at times of need. Where they differ is that France has a much longer history of welcoming migrant workers over a period of at least a hundred years whereas Britain's interest is much more recent. Immigration into Britain was relatively unpopular as people who were different seemed to be instantly treated with fear and mistrust whereas until the late sixties immigration into France was largely depoliticized and seen as an essential economic bonus. Until then it had been widely assumed that the migrants who arrived in France in the 1950s and 1960s from North and Sub-Saharan Africa would return home in the longer term. But by the late 1960s this assumption began to be questioned and by the early to mid-1970s, at least in terms of political opinion and public perception, things began to change. In response to growing public concerns France began to tighten its immigration policy and by 1977 there was a permanent ban on inward immigration. Over a very short period of time, immigration had gone from being an essentially economic phenomenon to a serious social problem at the heart of political, cultural and religious debates in France.

Chapter 2 (info)

One of the most fundamental differences between France and Britain is the nature of the state. More than 100 years ago France passed a law that enshrined the idea of *laïcité* – a concept that is essential to the modern

French Republic and still a powerful force in current politics. The word *laïcité* has no obvious English equivalent although it is related to the word 'laymen'. Its closest translation in terms of ideology is that of 'secularism', but this does not really convey the full force of the French expression. Essentially *laïcité* insists upon the strict separation of state from church, i. e. to have no state religion so that the state officially regards religion as a private affair. So unlike in Britain, where the Church of England has a formal - if nowadays somewhat unimportant role - in the administration of the state, the Catholic Church has no such status in the French Republic, despite the fact that a high proportion of French people are Catholics. This clear difference in state ideology obviously leads to significant differences in approaches to issues of legislation and cultural approaches to social policy.

As a 'secular' state, France's approach to immigration and issues of diversity was to follow a clear assimilationist model. It is important to the French that one is a citizen first and a full participant in the wider French community and that any form of religious or sub group identity is not sanctioned or otherwise encouraged by the state. In France, as a French citizen you are expected to leave cultural and ethnic differences at the border and are theoretically seamlessly assimilated into the republic. The ideology is that everyone is equal before a state that is blind to colour, race and religion. Ethnic minorities do not officially exist as it is constitutionally illegal to classify and count people by ethnicity. But the glaring gap between the theory and the reality of discrimination was becoming a problem in France. Whilst immigration remained a frequently solitary and male dominated process of migrating as an individual, separated from links with

home and family, in order to work, assimilation did not appear to have been problematic and therefore did not really present a challenge to the country's equilibrium. However, with the changes to patterns of migration which involved more families and, over time, the building of new communities of immigrants, particularly focussed in the poor 'banlieux', whole generations of young people of immigrant descent have been effectively 'ghettoised' and it appears that it is this that has encouraged third and fourth generation young people from immigrant families to seek their own identity and align themselves with religious or geographic communities as a response to the discrimination which does not exist in theory but which is blatantly apparent in reality.

In contrast to this Britain adopted a multiculturalist approach to diversity. Such an ideology attempts to create unity through difference, theorising that although a nation's sub cultures may be diverse, they should all be celebrated and embraced as they share common values. The two approaches are quite different and France (assimilation) and Britain (multiculturalism) are often used for comparative analysis as both adopt quite clearly identified models of these two approaches. The world continually refers back to these two countries in order to weigh the pros and cons of each social model. With both countries stalwartly defending their particular model, and with other countries diverging in their choice between them, the debate continues. Interestingly however, despite the application of two very different models and responses to immigration and diversity, both France and Britain appear to be facing similar dilemmas, problems and attitudes within their own countries towards immigration as a social issue.

Other relevant cultural issues and differences like religion, family education etc and how they relate to attitudes and public opinion.

Nationalism – France's assimilation model plays to Nationalist attitudes.

Britain as an Island – small within Europe but wanting to be influential. Self protection ideologies also play into the hands of Nationalism. (this issue may fit here or later on in another chapter)

Chapter 3

LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the 1970's both France and Britain have focussed increasingly on immigration policy and a raft of legislation has followed: In France during the eighties, under a left wing government there was a movement of compassion for immigrant labourers living alone for years, away from their families and a policy of " Regroupement Familial" (family regrouping) was developed through Jacques Chirac and made law on 29/4/1976, under the principle that " it is a right for each person to have a normal family life". By 1977 the policy had been revised and it was further modified in December 1984, 24 August 1993 and May 11 1998. These successive laws dealing with integration have tended to reaffirm the principles of the Republican model, although it highlights more intensive efforts to require through state policy what had previously been assumed would simply develop through residence and education. From the late seventies political reversals suffered by both political left and right leadership impacted on French immigration policies and integration issues. In 1993, the conservative government's interior minister, Charles Pasqua, put forth the goal of " zero immigration," later <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-immigration-in-france-history-essay/>

qualified to mean zero illegal immigration. The so-called Pasqua Laws prohibited foreign graduates from gaining employment in France, increased the waiting period for family reunification from one to two years, and refused residence permits to foreign spouses who were in France illegally prior to marrying. The legislation also increased the powers of police to deport foreigners. The election of a conservative president in 1995 continued the course of limiting immigration channels. As the far right Front Nationale led by Jean Marie Le Pen and focussing on an anti immigrant agenda began to rise in popularity, the conservative right responded by adopting some of the issues apparent to the French electorate, notably immigration control. In 1997, the Socialists gained control of the National Assembly and began rethinking immigration policy. The new government commissioned a report on Nationality and Citizenship. The report asserted that the Pasqua Laws deprived France of a potential skills base by deterring foreign students and professionals from settling in France. The report's recommendations formed the basis for new 1997 and 1998 legislation. The new rules aimed to provide highly skilled workers, scholars, and scientists with a special immigrant status, while simultaneously combating illegal immigration and regulating the stay of foreigners in France. Another significant change was that under the Pasqua Laws, children born in France of foreign parents were required to make a "voluntary declaration" of their intention to acquire French citizenship. However, under the new 1998 legislation children of foreign parents automatically acquired French citizenship at the age of 18.

Since 1945, the French Civil Code (Articles 21-24) has stipulated that no one can be naturalized without demonstrating his or her "assimilation to the

French community” through knowledge of the French language. The Sarkozy law of 2003 (Sarkozy was then minister of the interior) required demonstration of knowledge of rights and duties of French citizens, and this requirement was further strengthened in legislation passed in 2007. The new law required a contract for family unification, with sanctions for non compliance, and applicants were required to take two-month courses that constituted “ an evaluation of language ability and the values of the Republic” in their home countries (Schain 2008: 57).

Prior to 1962, the British Nationality Act of 1948 identified the terms ‘ Commonwealth citizen’ and ‘ British subject’ as one and the same thing. British passports identified their bearers as citizens of ‘ the United Kingdom and Colonies’, with the implication that every Commonwealth citizen was also a British subject, and, therefore, guaranteed the right of entry to the United Kingdom. The pro-Commonwealth Conservative Government, in power between 1954 and 1961, took the view that immigration controls were unnecessary and divisive. However, among working class Britons opinion was shifting strongly in favour of limiting non white immigration. Opinion polls showed an overwhelming majority in favour of controls, and the Government came under increasing pressure to change the law. The Labour Government won the elections in late 1964 with a tiny majority and was vulnerable to populist pressures exerted by right wing militants. The Conservative party backed a new Bill by the Midlands MP, Sir Cyril Osborne, which set out to deny entry to all migrants from the Commonwealth, except for those with parents and grandparents born in Britain. The Bill was thrown out in March 1965, but only a few months later the Labour Government

introduced a White Paper modifying the 1962 Act. The 1965 White Paper signalled the end of immigration for unskilled workers. It also tightened up the regulations on students, dependants and visitors, brought in health checks for new migrants and gave the Home Secretary the power to repatriate migrants. However, as public opinion cooled and Britain saw the publication of the first 'race relations bill', political argument began to move from immigration control to the management of race relations

The British multicultural approach to integration was developed through consensus between the two major political parties. This approach adopted a race-relations, or multicultural focus. Integration was seen in British policy more in terms of dealing with access to and discrimination of resource allocation. The Race Relations Act of 1965 focussed upon the provision of a public body to ensure fairness and advocacy in such issues. Further extension of this legislation in 1968 and 1976 provided substantial depth to this approach, which secured an agreed bipartisan approach to immigration, race, and multiculturalism

The concept of "race" in Britain was applied to virtually all "New Commonwealth" immigrants (primarily those from Pakistan and India, as opposed to those from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) in political debates about "coloured" immigration from the 1950s on. This way of looking at non-European immigrant populations was similar to the way that immigrant populations were viewed in France. However, in Britain, the difference was incorporated into the formal policy framework that was developed to manage and incorporate them. Roy Jenkins, home secretary at the time, noted in 1966: "I do not think that we need in this country a

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melting pot.... I define integration therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (Banton 1985: 71). By the 1980s, the education system had become an important proactive support for multiculturalism, which was also firmly grounded in the legal system.

Jenkins’ view was reinforced by a series of reports on education, Particularly the Swann Report in 1985 which identified the negative effect of racism upon the education of black children in the United Kingdom. The 1997 report by the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain further reaffirmed the United Kingdom as a “ community of communities”, disassociating integration from immigration.

Chapter 4 (info for...)

Current situation -attitudes

2005 riots in France

France wearing of headscarf etc

Role of the media – use current newspaper tv info to compare media reporting and influence

Chapter 5

Attitudes and stereotypes questionnaire.

Lots of empirical data available from sources like European Social Survey (some listed below) and ISSP of 1995.

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France 24 commissioned research across Europe on attitudes towards immigration.

Whilst these studies tell us about attitudes they do not give any indication as to why those attitudes are held or how they are maintained. I therefore decided to conduct a small scale questionnaire study to gain information as to current attitudes and to try to explore those attitudes in more depth. As such this study will be qualitative rather than quantitative and is not likely to contribute to the empirical picture. However it is hoped that it will offer some insight into the reasons why attitudes are held and why attitudes vary between French and British students by looking at students own experiences and views.

Use table below and results of ESS - available somewhere.... but I've lost it at the moment to develop a questionnaire. French more positive about their futures and more positive towards immigration - try to explore why these differences exist.

(ranking)

“ my future is promising”

“ the future of our society is promising”

“ I am sure I'll have a good job in the future”

France

25, 6% (8/10)

4, 2% (10/10)

27, 0% (8/10)

USA

54, 1 (2/10)

17, 9 ((2/10)

59, 6 (2/10)

Germany

36, 5

9, 7

34, 3

UK

35, 9

6, 9

38, 6

Denmark

59, 6

25, 9

60, 0

Sweden

49, 2

17, 7

43, 2

Spain

31, 6

6, 8

35, 8

Russia

28, 1

11, 2

42, 0

Poland

23, 6

4, 7

25, 3

Italy

22, 6

6, 7

26, 0

(source : 22, 000 young people 15-29 by Kairos/Fondapol, Le Figaro Jan. 4, 2008)

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