

Title—The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration to Western Europe

Author—Anthony M. Messina

Year—2007

Categories: Migration, (Post)Colonialism, Politics

Place: Western Europe

Time: 1945-2000

Argument Synopsis:

Messina's book is focused on migration to Western Europe since the end of the Second World War. He organizes this migration into three major waves: the first wave of migrant workers, the second wave of family reunification, and the third wave of illegal/irregular immigration. He notes that ethnicity has now become more salient as a political and social cleavage in Western Europe than any time since the Second World War. In the immediate postwar period, foreign workers were actively recruited and embraced by governments in part to replenish their working force after the losses of the war. The assumption was that these workers would return home once their labor was no longer needed. Messina highlights the oil crisis of 1973 as the precipitating event that shifted immigration into the second wave: family reunification. This wave made clear to these European states that these migrants were not returning home and that European societies were becoming increasingly multicultural and multiethnic. The third wave is defined by not traditional migration, or the current wave, an example could be the influx of asylum seekers. He argues that the mass xenophobia within these immigrant-receiving European countries is primarily a reaction by 'native' citizens to the gradual integration of foreigners and to the latter's increasing presence in economic, social, and political arenas. Messina approaches the study of immigration from a cross-national perspective and attempts to analyze this migration within the context of each of its distinct waves.

The book is organized into seven chapters, including the introduction. The second chapter describes the origins, core characteristics and trajectories of the three waves of migration. The third chapter explores the links between immigration and the recent surge in support of anti-immigrant parties. He argues that the growth of these parties is linked to many factors, the most important being the threat posed for 'native' citizens by the permanent settlement of immigrants. The fourth chapter explores the implications of postwar immigration for interdependence sovereignty, assessing the merits of the declining sovereignty thesis. The fifth chapter examines the causes underlying immigration's recent elevation to the policy agenda of the EU. The sixth chapter identifies the most important impacts of postwar migration, which are the permanent changes in domestic citizenship, the shift to social and cultural bases, and the rise of a neoliberal project. The final chapter highlights four trends underpinning the logics of migration in Western Europe. These are: immigrants are less likely to vote, immigrants who do vote are more likely to support left parties, left parties are more inclined to promote collective political interests of immigrants, and immigrants who win elective office are disproportionately affiliated with the left.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Immigrants and other foreigners are disproportionately concentrated within major metropolitan areas
- Postwar migration to Western Europe can be understood as an interest-driven phenomenon that has been and primarily remains defined and governed by sovereign national governments and states
- State control over immigration and immigration policy was not, is not, and can not be absolute