

Title—The Immigrant Threat: The Integration of Old and New Migrants in Western Europe since 1850

Author—Leo Lucassen

Year—2005

Categories: Migration, Politics, Europe, Culture

Place: Europe

Time: 1850-2000

Argument Synopsis:

Lucassen's book aims to bridge the gap between historians and social scientists on the subject of immigrant integration. He is concerned with the issue of immigrant integration within a European context, and argues that the current wave of migrants, which have been deemed 'incompatible with the West' by popular media, will likely integrate into European societies in much the same way as older waves of immigrants. To do so, Lucassen describes and compares the experiences of the "old migrants" with the post-1945 integration of "new migrants." For the purposes of the study, "old migrants" refer to the Irish in Britain, the Poles in Germany, and the Italians in France in the pre-1930 period. The "new migrants" refer to the Caribbeans in Britain, the Turks in Germany, and the Algerians in France, all of which arriving in the post-1945 period. This comparison of adaptation practices challenges the contemporary assumptions that mass migration is new and that current migrants are unassimilable. These assumptions cast immigration as a threat to state stability, which Lucassen aims to counter. He asserts the need to place contemporary migration patterns within a broader temporal context.

Lucassen looks at migration from the point of view of the histories of key European states—Britain, Germany, and France. With regards to the "new migrants," Lucassen demonstrates how there is greater concern about the second generation, especially in regard to Muslim extremism, while in the past the immigrants themselves tended to receive the most attention. The "new migrants" came in the post-1945 period, many under guest worker policies. Lucassen argues that it has become abundantly clear that most of the people who entered as guest workers have permanent settlers. He pushes for migration research to be more interdisciplinary conscious.

He relies mostly on secondary sources for his analysis. In terms of his comparison, his concerns are the structural indicators of integration, i.e. marriage rates, employment statistics, residential patterns, and local responses to immigration. He concludes that the integration of Italians in France and Poles in Germany was higher than imagined. Lucassen highlights class and gender as highly significant issues facing the integration of the "new migrants." He argues that the Turkish and Algerian populations in Germany and France respectively are not as segregated as is popularly imagined, especially regarding the second generation. He argues that there is no strong evidence to indicate that these "new migrants" are any less assimilable than the "old migrants." Lucassen posits that continued unemployment, racism, limited educational opportunities, and other factors pose a much greater threat to social stability than immigration itself.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- Contemporaries tend to overemphasize the threat of each successive wave of immigration
- Migration and human mobility are essential parts of Europe's, and the wider Western world's, past
- The problem is the limited opportunities for new immigrants to integrate rather than their willingness to identify with their new societies