

# BORDERS AND BARRIERS

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# BORDERS AND BARRIERS: NAVIGATING THE POSTCOLONIAL ERA OF MIGRATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*In memory of Michel*

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# INTRODUCTION

## ABSTRACT

*This chapter introduces the historical and contemporary context of migration, emphasizing its role in shaping societies globally. It discusses how globalization has influenced migration patterns, with international cooperation facilitating talent recruitment but also leading to labor division and discrimination against minority groups. The chapter highlights how nations struggle to maintain cultural homogeneity amid increased migration, exemplified by policy shifts like Brexit and restrictive measures from leaders like Trump and Netanyahu. The European Union's (EU) efforts to manage migration through new policies and agreements, such as the 2023 pact with Tunisia, are also examined. The chapter explores the dichotomy in perceptions of immigrants as either economic resources or problems, linking these views to internal colonialism theory and postcolonial perspectives. It addresses the rise of anti-immigration sentiment fueled by fears of job loss, cultural change, and security concerns, and how populist and far-right parties leverage these fears to gain support. The author, a Swedish scholar with a European background, acknowledges the subjective nature of their perspective. The book aims to provide a nuanced view of colonialism's legacy in contemporary migration discourse, focusing on Europe but also considering global implications. It critically analyzes national culture and integration policies, drawing on historical literature and theories to challenge dominant perceptions*

*and advocate for a more inclusive understanding of cultural dynamics and migration.*

**Keywords:** Globalization; migration; cultural homogeneity; integration policy; anti-immigration sentiments

Throughout human history, migration has been a constant force shaping societies and cultures across the globe. People have sought new lands and opportunities, driven by diverse factors ranging from political turmoil and war to economic struggles, famine, and the impact of climate change. In our contemporary world, marked by a new era of globalization, international institutions and organizations foster increased cooperation, leading to transformations in the capitalist system and influencing migration in myriad ways. This globalized world has facilitated businesses in recruiting talents from across the globe, bolstering their economic prosperity. Yet, this has also given rise to a division in the labor force, opening doors to discrimination against minority groups. Immigrants seeking a better life often find themselves stripped of their symbolic capital, compelled to accept menial jobs with lower wages and longer working hours.

The impacts of globalization extend beyond economic realms, permeating the fabric of nations' identities. Nations now grapple with preserving cultural homogeneity, exemplified by events like Brexit and the emergence of restrictive immigration policies spreading throughout the Western world. In a post-Berlin Wall era, leaders like Trump, Orbán, and Netanyahu have erected walls and barriers to shield their territories from unwanted migrants. Simultaneously, evolving attitudes among indigenous populations have shaped new EU policies, making it more difficult for refugees to seek asylum in Europe while easing the process for qualified and temporary labor. Sweden, recently known for its "open-heart politics" during the 2015 refugee wave, has shifted its stance, focusing on limiting asylum seekers' residence permits and offering economic support of EUR 2,500 to those who choose to return to their home countries. The shift in policy is also manifest in the media, which now reports the number of people leaving the country rather than the number of people arriving.

The enhanced movement across borders has led to stricter migration laws in many parts of the world. In the Western world, migration policies have increasingly focused on balancing enforcement with humanitarian considerations. Countries have introduced measures to curb unauthorized migration, aimed at streamlining the asylum processes and increasing cooperation among

member states ([migrationpolicy.com](http://migrationpolicy.com)). For instance, in 2023, the EU signed a new pact on asylum with non-EU countries, like Tunisia, to reduce irregular migration and exclude unwanted immigrants. More precisely, Tunisia's commitments focus on the prevention of migrant departures by sea, the fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking, as well as the return of foreigners from Tunisia to their countries of origin. In turn, the EU promises to enhance Tunisian citizens' mobility to the member states. The regulations, which thus aim at limiting the entry of non-Westerners, have met severe critique from human rights groups for being overly harsh and inefficient. It has also met criticism from civil society for the lack of human rights guarantees (Garcia & Frasca, 2024). The criticism has not been heeded by the EU citizens, who in the 2024 EU election made sure the right-wing populist parties with stricter migration laws made significant gains. For example, in some of the EU's oldest and most important member states, such as France, Germany, and Italy, the extreme right-wing parties – National Rally (Rassemblement National), Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland), and Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) – gained 31%, 16%, and 28% of the votes, respectively ([elections.europe.eu](http://elections.europe.eu)).

In recent years, the EU has faced complex migration challenges, leading to internal disputes over immigration policies. Since 2016, the EU has been actively working to reconcile internal disagreements and achieve consensus among its member states regarding immigration policies. A significant milestone was reached in December 2023 when the EU brokered consensus on a comprehensive asylum and migration system reform. This landmark agreement marked a pivotal moment in the EU's ongoing effort to establish a unified approach to managing migration and asylum across its member states.

Within the immigration debate, two contrasting perspectives dominate – immigrants are viewed as “resources” with potential economic benefits or as “problems” to be addressed. This dichotomy reflects an underlying internal colonialism that manifests on home ground, casting immigrants as the colonized and indigenous populations as the colonizers. The roots of this dichotomy can be traced back to colonial times when the movement of people was often involuntary and associated with exploitation. Postcolonial theory provides a lens through which we can understand contemporary immigration debates as continuations of these historical patterns. Internal colonialism theory further elucidates how immigrants, despite physically residing within a nation, are often socially and economically marginalized, treated as outsiders, and subjected to systemic discrimination.

A period marked by heightened economic, cultural, and security anxieties reveals how political forces harness these fears to shape policies and public

attitudes toward immigration. Anti-immigration sentiment has become a significant and polarizing issue in the global political landscape. A common perception is that immigrants take jobs away from native citizens or drive down wages by accepting lower pay. This perception fuels fears that immigrants overburden public services such as healthcare, education, and welfare systems. Additionally, there are widespread fears that immigrants will not assimilate and will change the cultural landscape of the host country. Some believe that immigrants are more likely to commit crimes despite dubious proof. For instance, Kubrin (2021), a professor in criminology at the University of California, has shown in her research that people, despite lack of evidence to support it, believe there is a causal link between immigrants and crime. In a survey on peoples opinions about immigrants she found that 72 percent of the respondents believe immigrants and crime goes hand in hand. Heightened fears of terrorism have led to increased scrutiny of immigrants, particularly from certain regions, exacerbating tensions. Concerns over maintaining a cohesive national identity and the negative impact of multiculturalism further complicate the polarization of society.

Politicians and parties with populist, nationalist, or far-right agendas often use anti-immigration rhetoric to gain support. Media coverage that focuses on negative stories about immigration can exacerbate fears and prejudices. This dynamic is evident in many countries that have seen a rise in far-right parties that prioritize anti-immigration policies, such as the National Rally, Alternative for Germany, Brothers of Italy, the UK Independence Party in the UK, and Sweden Democrats in Sweden. In response to these sentiments, stricter immigration laws, increased border security, and refugee camps have been implemented in several countries. These measures reflect the growing influence of anti-immigration sentiment in shaping national policies and political landscapes globally.

This book embarks on a profound journey into the discourse surrounding national culture and its intersection with immigrants' labor market challenges. Through critical analysis, it unveils how colonial ideas are perpetuated within current anti-immigrant narratives. Starting with an account of Europe's colonial history and the concepts that justified colonial conquests, the book aims to dismantle the truth claims embedded in the dominant discourse on national culture. It aims to contribute to an alternative perspective on knowledge production that challenges the mainstream approach to national culture. This approach is deeply embedded in colonial ideas and perpetuated through the positivist tradition, which prioritizes empirical, measurable data and often marginalizes non-Western knowledge systems.

The primary focus is on Europe, a deliberate choice stemming from the fact that colonialism, a pivotal theme of the analysis, was predominantly a European phenomenon. However, while the bulk of this book draws from textual analysis and empirical research focused on European contexts, it is essential to recognize the global ramifications of European colonialism and imperialism. Thus, alongside exploring the European colonial past and its contemporary impacts, this book will also make some global comparisons and considerations, analyzing the broader implications of colonialism and its effects worldwide. While the primary focus remains on Europe, previous studies and statistical sources will provide insights into other regions, and examples from other countries are included, ensuring a comprehensive examination of colonialism's impact on a global scale.

The second chapter provides a historical retrospective of European colonialism, detailing the motivations, methods, and legacies of colonial powers such as Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, and Germany. It examines how these nations established empires through exploration, exploitation, and the justification of their actions via various ideologies. It sheds light on the construction of colonial discourse and its influence on integration policies and cultural differences. The chapter draws on a rich body of historical literature examining Western colonialism's emergence and impact. Academic books and articles such as *The Dutch Overseas Empire 1600–1800* by Emmer and Gomers (2021), *Critique of Black Reason* by Achille Mbembe (2017), *American Slavery, American Freedom* by Edmund Morgan (1975), *West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast* by Law and Mann (1999), and *King Leopold's Ghost* by Adam Hochschild (1998) provide valuable insights into the colonial past.

Furthermore, this book examines the diverse perceptions of national culture, presenting essentialistic and constructed views, and exploring critical management and postcolonial theories that challenge the dominant perception of national culture. In the pursuit of cultural hegemony, the book investigates current policies that promote integration through assimilation, immigrants' roles in the capitalistic economy, and the dehumanization of minority groups. It emphasizes the discursive nature of national culture, highlighting how culture is constructed through prevailing discourses shaping perceptions of reality among both native populations and immigrants.

It finally considers the dynamics of migration and national identity in the context of globalization, highlighting how economic globalization, political turmoil, economic struggles, and climate change drive increased migration. These factors push individuals to seek stability, often emphasizing their cultural identity in response to pressures, which leads to a focus on cultural

homogeneity and societal divisions. This can foster fear, distrust, and nationalist sentiments, complicating migrant integration and perpetuating stereotypes.

Globalization has also facilitated labor mobility, crucial for Western countries facing labor shortages. The chapter discusses the paradox of migration policies that exclude undesired migrants while attracting those needed for economic growth, comparing this to colonial exploitation. It critiques the positivist tradition for shaping simplistic models of national culture and advocates for an inclusive social contract embracing societal change and mutual adaptation. It suggests educational systems incorporate civic values and democratic principles to promote a multiplicity of identities and calls for decolonizing knowledge systems and management practices to develop equitable migration policies.

Before going any further, it is important to note that I am a Swedish scholar with no experience as a refugee or a non-European immigrant. I was born and raised in Sweden by a Norwegian mother and a Swedish father, and having lived abroad with my French husband, I have gained some understanding of European dynamics. I also acknowledge that my background and ideological perspective influence my approach and interpretation of the findings and analysis. It is important to note that this book does not claim to be objective. However, it is based on research, including earlier studies, academic literature, statistics, and interviews. The aim is to provide an alternative perspective on the enduring legacy of colonialism and its influence on our ideas about migration. By examining these issues through postcolonial and multidisciplinary lenses, the book seeks to uncover the complexities and systemic biases that shape migration policies and integration practices. In addition to exploring historical contexts, this work critically engages with current political and public debates as well as the discourse of national culture. It addresses the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in migration policies, highlighting how they often perpetuate inequalities and cultural hegemony. Through this analysis, the book aims to contribute to a more informed and equitable discourse on migration, ultimately fostering greater understanding and inclusivity. Although I am aware of the existence of success stories, the focus of this book lies on the challenges migrants often face in all stages of their journey toward a better future for themselves and their families.

## 2

# EUROPEAN COLONIAL HISTORY

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter provides a historical overview of European colonialism, detailing how nations like Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands began their colonial endeavors in the 15th and 16th centuries, driven by exploration and trade motivations. These nations established vast empires through maritime exploration, setting up trading posts and colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The chapter outlines these early powers' distinct colonial practices and legacies, highlighting Portugal's focus on Brazil, Spain's exploitation in the Americas, and the Netherlands' trading empire. The chapter also examines the later colonial efforts of France and Britain, which became prominent in the 17th and 18th centuries. These countries utilized different methods, including the encomienda system and casta hierarchy in Spanish colonies, and the civilizing mission and divide-and-rule tactics in British colonies. The chapter discusses how these practices were justified through ideologies of racial superiority and the civilizing mission, deeply embedding racism and social hierarchies into colonial rule. Additionally, the chapter addresses the colonial ventures of Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, and Germany. It covers Denmark's settlements in the Caribbean and Greenland, Sweden's short-lived colonies and involvement in the slave trade, Italy's brutal regime in Africa, Belgium's horrific exploitation of the Congo under King Leopold II, and Germany's late but impactful colonial period marked by the Herero and Nama genocide.*

**Keywords:** Colonialism; exploitation; racial hierarchy; civilizing mission; trade and slavery

## FORGING COLONIAL EMPIRES: EXPLORATION, MOTIVATIONS, AND IMPACT

The 15th and 16th centuries marked the emergence of significant European colonial endeavors. It began with the discovery of the sea route around Africa's southern coast in 1488 and the discovery of America in 1492 and reached its peak in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Throughout these historical periods, European nations like Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England, France, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, and Germany, Belgium, established colonies, trading posts, or backed enterprises that yielded economic and political advantages for their respective countries. In this chapter, I will make a historical retrospective of these countries' colonial past. To succeed in their endeavor to conquer overseas territories, the European colonizers needed to construct a discourse to justify their actions. The concepts that formed the backbone of this strategy will be italicized in the text and further discussed at the end of the chapter. The USA is excluded from the overview as it has been defined as an imperialist and not as a colonizer.

### THE COLONIAL PRECURSORS: PORTUGAL, SPAIN, AND THE NETHERLANDS IN THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands were colonial powers with distinct characteristics and approaches to colonization. All three nations were maritime powers with strong naval traditions, which enabled them to explore new territories, seek trade routes, and expand their empire. Despite their shared maritime power, their motivation, method, and legacy differed.

#### *Portugal's Colonial Legacy: From Maritime Exploration to the Establishment of Colonies*

Founded in the 15th century, Portugal was one of the earliest and most extensive colonial empires with territories spanning several continents. Its colonial venture began due to Don Henrique of Portugal's interest in cartography and maritime exploration which facilitated the advancement of navigation techniques. The navigation system proved pivotal to the Portuguese mariners in their discovery of the African coastline and ultimately empowered the explorer Bartolomey Dias to chart the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope in 1488. Due to the Portuguese monarchy's unwavering financial backing and encouragement, Portuguese conquerors established an array of trading posts, forts, and colonies along the African shoreline. Places currently known as Cap