

# The Impact of Immigration on National Identity

Abenaitwe Jackline

Department of Business Kampala International University Uganda

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines how immigration reshapes national identity through a multidisciplinary lens, drawing on history, sociology, political theory, and cultural studies. While the effects of immigration on economic and urban systems are well documented, its influence on national identity remains under-analyzed. This study examines the historical context of immigration across different national models, from civic to ethnic-based identities, and considers how immigration policies reflect and reshape these identities. By employing social identity theory and the dual identity framework, the paper uncovers how group perceptions and integration processes impact collective belonging. It investigates the demographic transformation of immigrant populations, their socio-economic contributions, cultural integration, and political reception in both Western and non-Western societies. Through case studies in Europe and North America, the research highlights tensions between inclusion and exclusion, nostalgia and pluralism, and nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The findings suggest that immigration acts as both a challenge to and a catalyst for redefining national identity in increasingly pluralistic societies.

**Keywords:** Immigration, National Identity, Citizenship, Social Integration, Multiculturalism, Belonging.

## INTRODUCTION

While immigration's impact on urban politics is well studied, its influence on national identity is less understood. Rising xenophobia, nationalism, and populism coexist with growing support for diversity and inclusion. These dynamics prompt questions about how immigration policy adjustments relate to transformations in national identity. Key concepts like nation-building, citizenship, and social cohesion concerning immigration have been widely discussed. However, the ways in which cultural, moral, and political meanings are shaped by changes in membership remain underexplored. Immigration significantly impacts societal practices, moral principles, and political institutions, influencing individual interactions. Scholars have noted how ethnic and cultural minorities urge the Dutch polity to reconsider its identity as multicultural or multiethnic. Such contestations indicate that immigration fundamentally poses an identity question for nations. Changes in immigration policies reflect not only the accommodation of newcomers but also disputes over the essence of national identity and its moral, political, and practical implications. To date, empirical studies examining the link between immigration policy adoption and national identity transformation are lacking [1, 2].

### Historical Context of Immigration

Immigration has significantly impacted Western Europe in the past thirty years, leading to important connections between immigration and nation-states that influence citizenship politics. European states are reevaluating their naturalization criteria in response to migration, resulting in varied paths in immigration politics. Nations like the United States, built by immigrants, have had citizenship central to their identity, defined in legal terms, while countries like Germany emphasize ethno-cultural membership. France promotes a universalist citizenship theory, embracing individuals regardless of background. After terrorist attacks in New York, London, and Madrid, many European governments deemed multiculturalism a failure, prompting them to adopt stricter integration methods, like the assimilationist approach seen in French citizenship. In the U.S., illegal immigration has been a significant issue over the past two decades, raising questions about American identity. Immigrants have long sought a better life in America, contributing to its strength, culture, and diversity. Yet, amidst this, voices have often criticized newer arrivals, evoking a nostalgic vision of a past dominated by Anglo-Saxon white Protestants. The

immigration policy conversation continues to ebb and flow with societal changes, where nativist sentiments have frequently clashed with the ideals of liberty and acceptance [3, 4].

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This research explores social identity, widely applied in sociology, political science, and psychology. Social identity encompasses aspects that define a person as part of a group, influencing perceptions, attitudes towards in-groups, and group behavior. The study reviews frameworks explaining how national and European identities affect attitudes toward immigration and their mechanisms. A notable configuration is the dual problem identity, where strong identification with both national and European identities can lead to exclusionary attitudes toward other nationals. The national context often employs mechanisms to mitigate perceived threats. Current literature lacks discussions on dual identity concerning migration, though some insights exist on potential conflicts in social identities amid migration challenges. Crucially, merely endorsing a dual identity is insufficient; group members must view their dual identity as relevant and compatible. If they perceive their identities as conflicting, it may lead to in-group rejection and negative identity conflicts, fostering exclusionary attitudes towards newcomers. In contexts where a European identity narrative prevails, this exclusion can extend to other European nationals [5, 6].

### **Demographics of Immigrants**

At the onset of the 20th century, Russian tsarist empire's political developments had direct impact on the demographic picture in Poland and Polish lands. Vilna, Lodz and other industrial cities continued to grow with waves of Jewish migration from the Russian Pale of Settlement. This situation contributed both to the narrower professional development of city Jews, as well as to the revitalization of national awareness in Polish Jewry. Jewish intelligentsia in a traditional sense, or Haskalah in a wider sense, encompassed a single stratum that dealt with literature and science, and this had the most significant effect on a politically passive subproletariat. Included into the democratic movement, Polish public seeking for national sovereignty encouraged political mobilization in the most impoverished strata of cities, motivating them with the declaration of the national movement as an opportunity for social and national emancipation. Rose down-to-earth uncompromising assertions were the basis for a gradual charter of distinct nationalism. In 1910-1911, due to budget shortages, all schools went astray along national lines. The fiscal and financial reform perceiving small towns would transform rather diligently into an educational, health and social reform. The Brith Shalom movement sought no less. Nevertheless, a very likely educational distance was threatening to take place between big cities and small towns. Such developments incited resentment on all sides. The Jewish press in Warsaw anticipated a clear decline of 'national' expression revenues. Foritoui boasted about his former interviewer Duce, exemplifying altruism in ethnic alienation. Vilna and Radom sth verbal debates and accusations on Jews sneering on Polishness were at least revealed [7, 8].

### **Economic Impact of Immigration**

The movement of people across national borders can rapidly change national identity. Bolivians constitute the largest Latin American population in Spain, while Moroccans are the predominant newcomers to southern Europe. This paper explores how immigrants maintain their ethnic and national identities, how contact with their homeland and host country can reshape these identities, and how policies influence this process. The entropy of identities often increases, leading to significant transformations in national identity, which may have otherwise persisted for centuries. The impact of immigration on identity varies depending on the identities involved and their interactions with globalization forces. Emphasis is placed on the home country as an ethnic homeland and the host country as a national homeland, noting the varied public functions and expressions of identity in different contexts. Dismissing the systematic study of public values may diminish the relevance of national identities. The theory presented highlights a pluralist perspective on integration, focusing on the interplay between citizenship requirements and ethnic cohesion. This theory suggests that cosmopolitan values gradually permeate deep-rooted national beliefs. Immigration introduces additional complexities, affecting identity formation through interactions with other public identities. The case of Belgium illustrates changes in national identities due to immigration, highlighting the acceptance of European identities alongside resistance towards values tied to Belgium or Flemish identity, interpreted through the impact's volume and direction [9, 10].

### **Social Integration**

Integration, which includes adopting the main features of the host country while maintaining the core elements of one's own culture and traditions, is particularly important in a multicultural context. National integration is based on a shared sense of belonging to one country. The conditions under which this occurs are that all people feel they are treated equally, as full and equal members of the nation. Nation-

building happens largely through discourse, the arenas in which these messages are formulated and transmitted to the public, and subsequent social interaction. Belonging involves a continual feeling of being part of a community, engulfed in ties and bonds of familiarity, permanence, safety, and security. Immigration can be understood as commensurate with or even the same as national change. New immigrants will not be idle but will actively realize their visions and ambitions for their new place of residence. They will invest their faith, input capital, and intensively engage with other related authorities and people in various ways to make claims about what a Portland-centric, Portland-oriented, growing, safe, and comfortable place means. Immigration has an inward side, producing potentially dysfunctional conflicts over who owns the place, to whom it belongs, and in what ways, leading to negotiation between ethnic and civil national narratives. Immigration in large numbers, often from different continents, has transformed the character of the outer city in particular. For the first time since World War II, upwardly penciled work is beginning, but it comes with fears of greater consumerism and markets encroaching on relatively secluded, old stock nooks. Similarly, immigrant concerns over exclusion and recognition of their city and ethnic reminder are typically voiced to city officials and news media by local dramatic and cultural groups, through protests or performances. Consequently, claims over a place become society-wide, subjectively owned yet socially contested, and negotiated concerning both material concerns over the place's future and social concerns about belonging and recognition [11, 12].

#### **Cultural Contributions**

The global era is defined by shrinking geographic boundaries and demographic shifts. Immigration patterns are changing, with many countries becoming attractive destinations. Traditionally, populations moved from rural to urban areas, except for countries like Bangladesh, Sweden, and Japan. Recently, significant population movements are seen from northern to southern regions, and from cities to suburbs. Different countries exhibit varying geographic locations and immigrant percentages. In the U.S., immigrants come from Asia, Mexico, Europe, and the Middle East; New Zealand and Australia primarily attract migrants from China, India, and the Southern Pacific; England has higher percentages from the Caribbean, Middle East, Africa, and Europe; Canada sees many Caribbean and Asian immigrants in metropolitan areas. An estimated 200 million migrants globally, half residing in developed countries, impact these nations' educational systems. Many qualified second language teachers work with culturally and linguistically diverse students, which can facilitate or hinder language access. While nations emphasize culturally responsive education, implementation varies. This approach is thought to encourage positive social dynamics, engaging students with their diverse backgrounds through comparative curriculum organization [13, 14].

#### **Political Perspectives**

Political leaders significantly influence the integration of immigrants through their policies and rhetoric. Establishing a general baseline for improving migrant perceptions is crucial and rests on those in power. Even with supportive discourse, negative narratives can erode these efforts, especially in nations historically favoring immigration. Recent global social unrest has intensified opposition to integration, framing immigration as a threat to national identity. Portugal serves as a case study, where despite strong inclusive policies, xenophobia has emerged, revealing a disconnect between public opinion and political discourse. Political, social, historical, and economic factors contribute to this shift, as seen in Portugal's changing narrative around migration. The examination of specific contexts highlights the impact of political and media influences in fostering exclusionary stances on immigration, demonstrating the complexities at play in shaping public attitudes and policies [15, 16].

#### **National Identity and Citizenship**

In contemporary discussions on immigration, national identity is a significant topic, particularly in relation to political and social spheres. Many believe national identities are jeopardized by large immigrant populations entering traditionally homogeneous nation-states. The current immigration debates in Britain reveal a strong connection between national identity and immigration perceptions, raising essential questions about belonging. This concern goes beyond abstract citizenship issues, delving into who has the right to benefits from national membership. The relationship between national identity and immigration policy faces substantial criticism in today's global and plural society. Advocates for globalization contest the idea of a singular national identity, suggesting that globalization redefines the modern nation-state's foundation. National identity is increasingly viewed as plural, representing one of many identities' individuals hold, possibly the least significant among various group affiliations. National culture, once considered uniform, now encompasses numerous subcultures, some with transnational influences. Consequently, citizenship and belonging transform into collective endeavors where identity and membership extend beyond state and territory, transcending geopolitical borders and databases [17, 18].

### Case Studies

Speculation around migrants' impact on national identity has been invoked to influence societies' sentiment regarding migration at both polar ends of the political spectrum. The flow of high-skill migrants owned by multicultural firms/brands boosts the strength of a universal cosmopolitan identity. Alternatively, the flow of low-skill migrants from neighboring countries raises fears of national identity deterioration. For both highly-educated/wealthy, as well as poorly-educated/poor migrants, the influence of perceptions of national identity on national belonging is also curvature-based. The more pervasive the expatriates have settled in an area of a nation, the stronger the individuals' sense of local identity prevails over a national one. Perceptions of excessive immigration from neighboring ethnicities/countries can also amplify threat perceptions of ethnic groups. To avoid national identity deterioration, biased social media messages can be sent to increase a favorable view on an opposing group's immigration policy.

### An Example of Malicious Political Use of the Civic Effect

While the Civic Effect can be abused politically to manipulate sentiments surrounding immigration, societal sentiments can also be condensed and bent into self-exonerating opposition stances against the maleficent effects of comprehension on immigration. An income inequality-breaching democratic action in the modern era is the financial crisis in 2008. Even though after the crisis, large-scale acquisitions of productive/investment assets flourished, it was puzzling to see how it didn't provoke outrage, paradoxically. The principle of civic effect posits that in richer societies, concessional effect on immigrants is milder than the other way around. Capital movement from developing to developed countries declined drastically with the enforcement of cross-border capital control regulations. This limit to arbitrage on new equilibrium price of immigration supplies the answer as to why matter-bringing elites were out-crowding themselves [19, 20].

### Impact of Media on Perception

The media play an important role of opinion formation and influence people's perspective over a given issue. Media treatments influence the perception of immigrants and the possible backlash that migration can generate. The impact of media representation of immigrants is significant in a two-way process, e.g., collectivities react to these representations, with a redefinition of their identity, attitudes, referents, and roles to oppose the one reported. This media treatment can be a gain or a risk for commercial, political, operational, cultural, symbolic, or social reasons. Greater knowledge and awareness from the outside implies, for a given group, the possibility of being better understood, but also better imaged, stereotyped, and misrepresented. At the same time, the role of symbolic representation, normalisation, and commodification can turn into an exposure to high risks. The uses and media usages conspire to a social mapping of a society's inner complexity. Such inner representations (e.g. local identities, roles, values, ways) contribute to establishing a balance between worlds that are composed of opposed forces (e.g. allegiance/hostility, inclusion/exclusion, recognition/misrecognition, power/hopelessness, representation/misrepresentation). On the opposite side, it has been assumed here that media can also be at stake after migration settlement and, thus, inhabit both sides of the process. In fact, media can treat migration issues, can be treated by them (i.e. in the sense of being the object of representation), and can be sign and tool of opposite movements over, on the one hand, migration policies and, on the other hand, the promotion of human mobility. The role of media in the production and consumption of social representations is crucial, since they were born with public audiences in mind as collective forms of representations allowing a broad sharing of knowledge over a social group or by it [21, 22].

### Future Trends in Immigration

Forces shaping the immigration environment in the early 21st century reflect pressures from prior decades, such as ongoing global economic growth, population growth, demographic trends, and the effects of relationships with diaspora communities. Crises and conflicts continue to influence migration flows. However, predicting migration patterns is fraught with uncertainty due to evolving global contexts and policy responses from sending and receiving states. Factors emerging strongly at the century's start include a developing multilateral migration system, shifts in Europe's immigration laws, and rising social tensions linked to migration and development. Recent political changes have further complicated the immigration landscape. Despite the increasing significance of international migration, states have been slow to adapt policies effectively to leverage its benefits while tackling associated challenges. Global discussions on cooperative migration policies have been inadequate, partly because sending and receiving countries prioritize different approaches. Countries in the Global South, often dealing with outflows and migration crises, favor "managed on the move" strategies. In contrast, many Global North nations, facing polarized public opinions, have defaulted to less participatory approaches, reshaping the concept of normative immigration agendas. As concerns regarding immigration and

diversity rise within OECD countries, immigration management increasingly aligns with broader policies encompassing social cohesion, adaptation, integration, employment, and citizenship access [23, 24].

### CONCLUSION

Immigration fundamentally alters how nations perceive and define themselves. Far from being a mere demographic shift, it is a cultural, moral, and political phenomenon that reconfigures concepts of belonging, citizenship, and identity. While immigration introduces challenges such as cultural tensions and political backlash, it also provides opportunities for democratic renewal and cultural enrichment. The study reveals that national identity is not static; it is a dynamic and contested space where civic and ethnic narratives coexist, clash, or merge depending on social, economic, and political forces. The impact of immigration on national identity thus reflects deeper societal negotiations about who belongs, who decides, and on what terms. As global mobility continues to rise, nations must confront the complexities of inclusive identity-building in ways that go beyond policy and into the realm of values and vision. Future research should prioritize empirical studies linking immigration policy evolution with shifts in public identity narratives, helping to inform balanced integration approaches in plural societies.

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