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Gov 221 European Politics

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Essay Question:

François Gaspard discusses the situation of immigrants who are “economically integrated and culturally excluded” (p. 95). Can the prospect of making a decent living in a prosperous European economy, and of participating as a citizen in a stable European democracy, facilitate cultural inclusion and turn people away from the more alienated, divisive, and violent aspects of “identity politics” – that is, politics based on such things as ethnicity, race, and religion?

A key to integration: in the head, in the heart, or in the wallet?

The Euro banknotes picture arcs and bridges that could be built anywhere in Europe; they look familiar to everyone, yet belong nowhere in particular. Postmodernist bridges on the common currency represent not only the idealistic vision of common European identity, but also the realistic feature of the European Union, in which economic activity is believed to be the main vehicle of integration into national as well as supranational communities. But despite its enormous economic success, the European Union remains a political dwarf. The Maastricht-born concept of European citizenship will never eclipse the legal and emotional bonds of national citizenship. Although growing prosperity and open borders are supposed to cultivate common interests, a truly European identity is slow to emerge. The ordinary Europeans still define their identities by ethnicity, race, and religion. They have shown their true allegiances by defeating the European constitution in referendums in France and the Netherlands and – what is more troublesome – by supporting the extreme right. In this essay, I will compare the integration models of the United Kingdom and France, concluding that neither system adequately facilitates economic and cultural integration of immigrants, and argue that although economic integration

and democratic participation are unlikely to decrease the importance of ethnicity, race, and religion, they can reduce violent manifestations of “identity politics.”

French and British models of national identity

Despite having applied racial classification in 1940s when “granting priority to Balts and keeping out the Jews,”ⁱ the United Kingdom is characterized by the multicultural model of integration, which grants considerable freedoms to cultural communities and recognizes group rights. Today, the United Kingdom boasts the most comprehensive race-relations legislation in the EU.ⁱⁱ Nevertheless, even Whitehall failed to adequately address the rising levels of immigration that brought the sensitive issues of race, citizenship and national culture to the surface in the late 20th century. During the 1970s, as disparities between occupational and social classes faded, new and more problematic barriers between natives and foreigners surfaced, causing political fragmentation and instigating “a shift to the right in values and policy agendas.”ⁱⁱⁱ Despite the British history as a net *exporter* of migrants,^{iv} tolerance and hospitality of foreigners in the UK have been eroding after WWII.^v The problem was finally addressed in 2000 with a bill that prohibited “direct and indirect discrimination in all public bodies and plac[ed] a ‘positive duty’ on all public officials and authorities to promote racial equalities.”^{vi} The British multiculturalist approach has also been modified to incorporate some aspects from the French and American models. (For example, the United Kingdom introduced compulsory citizenship and language tests, as well as instituted a citizenship ceremony.)

British multiculturalism contradicts the French republican ideal of assimilation, which was manifested in 2004, when the French overwhelmingly supported legislation prohibiting “conspicuous signs of religious affiliation,” although only a few thousand Muslim schoolgirls wore the headscarf in France.^{vii} The French national identity concept embraces anyone who

subscribes to French republican values. France encourages newcomers to accept the dominant cultural and political values and leaving their previous identities behind.^{viii} But although French territory-based citizenship^{ix} seems extraordinary inclusive, immigrants to France increasingly encounter formal and informal barriers to equal participation in the French society. Consistent with its tradition of *dirigisme*, the French government takes an active role in homogenizing the society.^x However, because one's national identity revolves around the intangible things vested memory and symbols, an immigrant's past allegiances cannot disappear completely, no matter what the state wishes. Although it is politically incorrect to assert one's ethnic distinctiveness, identity cannot be willed away and may reassert itself with violence when subdued or ignored. Moreover, a society living in denial of its own diversity jeopardizes its indivisibility and cohesiveness by weakening the collective identities of its members.

Participation in the Economic System

Mark Kesselman notes that behind an economic doctrine stands a "broad moral and cultural vision of society."^{xi} A state's fiscal policy always speaks to the deeper relations between its subjects. As a result, certain economic systems are more conducive to integration than others.

For example, the British *laissez-faire* orientation creates incentives to hire new entrants to the labor market^{xii}, offers more opportunities for the immigrants, who do not feel excluded from the economic advantages that citizenship in a welfare state bestows, and helps avoid welfare dependency, which may restrict the newcomers' mobility in the society. At the same time, a leaner welfare state provides no protection for British citizens who tend to blame immigrants when economy stumbles. The means-tested benefits of the British welfare state do not aim to reduce inequalities,^{xiii} and the wide gaps between rich and poor translate into even wider gaps between immigrants and natives, fostering exclusion. Not surprisingly, the "re-politization of

race” was strongest under Margaret Thatcher, who rejected collectivism, criticized the redistribution of resources from rich to poor, and denied state responsibility for full employment.^{xiv} Importantly, limited state intervention may contribute to economic efficiency and growth, making the society more welcoming toward newcomers. The New Labor’s third way, which includes “investment in people, with lifelong learning initiatives, better industrial training, and higher school standards,”^{xv} seems to be the best way of integrating immigrants into the community, and it fulfills Allport’s condition of cultivating common interests in young foreign and native workers. If the New Labor succeeds in developing an “inclusive stakeholder economy,”^{xvi} immigrant workers will be able to obtain the skills and training necessary to participate in the labor market on par with the native population. The New Labor’s Social Exclusion Unit founded in 1997 is also instrumental in ensuring that the immigrants feel included.^{xvii}

By contrast, the French government has “sustain[ed] the ethos of a caring society” in a large welfare state throughout the victorious rise of capitalism in the 20th century.^{xviii} The French prefer social solidarity to the Anglo-Saxon individualism and focus on personal “success.”^{xix} One would expect this kind of society to be most welcoming toward immigrants. However, the more there is to share, the harder sharing becomes. According to Mark Mazower, “the rise of the welfare state (...) meant that citizenship was now understood in terms of costs and benefits rather than political rights (voting) and duties (defending the nation-state).”^{xx} The more rights and benefits citizens enjoy, the more important it becomes to control borders and draw a line between citizens and foreigners. Moreover, as globalization begins to challenge the generosity of the French welfare state, unemployment increases and more tensions between newcomers and natives rise. Focus on protecting the old jobs resulted in a two-tiered structure of French labor

market, where highly protected public sector jobs exist alongside with part-time, short-term contracts.^{xxi} As a result, immigrants have fewer opportunities to become full-pledged members of the French community. Unfortunately, French “Malthusian mind-set” as well as the “habit to prefer confrontation to negotiation”^{xxii} only exacerbates the problem.

Political representation

As Gaspard writes, “the only real opportunity to gauge a city’s ‘state of mind’ occurs when its citizens come together to choose their representatives.”^{xxiii} However, the indicators of the ‘state of mind’ of immigrant noncitizen population often pass through the democratic institutions unnoticed.

Although the number of ethnic minority MPs has grown,^{xxiv} minority representation in the British Parliament remains inadequate, which results from such “rigidities” as single-member, simple-plurality electoral system and the absence of proportional representation.^{xxv} Absence of the majority requirement exaggerates the victory of the party that receives most votes reducing the influence of smaller parties.^{xxvi} On the one hand, it diminishes the probability of electing an extreme right party like the French National Front. On the other hand, it results in the questionable representation and dubious fairness, both of which alienate immigrants – voters and non-voters alike – and leave the divisive identity issues unaddressed.

Denial of ethnic differences, inherent in the French model, leads to ignoring the fact that different ethnic groups have different concerns and speaks to the “virtual absence of minority representatives in key political institutions like the Constitutional Council, the National Assembly, or the government.”^{xxvii} France employs a two-ballot election procedure; if no absolute majority is achieved at the first ballot, a runoff election between two candidates — usually the left against the right — follows. The two-ballot system encourages alliances, which “maximizes

the chances of a cohesive coalition gaining a majority in the parliament.”^{xxviii} However, interests of immigrants are likely to be represented by small, fringe parties that are unlikely to ally with major parties. Moreover, because immigrants are likely to work in industry and live in big cities, they are affected by yet another inherent unfairness in the French electoral system, which results from giving rural residents nearly double the representation when choosing senators from France’s 100 *departements*.^{xxix} The French system also allows the “fringe parties ... to be spoilers if their candidates remain in the runoff.”^{xxx} As a result, in the first round of presidential elections in 1988 the leader of the right-wing National Front polled 14 % by blaming immigration for rising unemployment, crime and job insecurity.^{xxxi}

Although collective identities speak the spiritual language of beliefs and values, they talk loudest and coarsest when material resources are scarce. The color of passport of a “foreign-looking” man may be impossible to guess, but the color of his passport would matter no more than the color of his skin if both the foreigner and the onlooker had secure jobs and could afford a decent living. It was not religion that motivated the riots of Muslim protest group, “AC le feu,” in 2005; the young people involved wanted “the same respect and advantages a everyone else.”^{xxxii} Economic equality and prosperity provide strong foundations for intercultural integration and decrease ethnic tensions. Economy motivates people to pursue a common goal of prosperity, and it is the pursuit of common goals that enables contact to reduce intergroup prejudice and establish “the perception of common interests and common humanity,” as Gordon Allport proves.^{xxxiii} When the economy fails, the weight is disproportionately borne by the immigrants because they lack legal protection or the social safety net and do not qualify for social welfare. George Crane underscores the importance of experiences in the development of national identity suggesting that “those who suffer most economically would have the weakest

national feelings.”^{xxxiv} The newcomers would be more likely to adopt the values of a host country if they shared in the economic accomplishments of its citizens and saw the host country as their future home rather than a place to spend a few years making money.

Significantly, the primary reason for peacetime immigration is improving one’s economic status. Few leave home because disagree with the conception of national identity. However, the “nonmaterial aspects of the politics of collective identities”^{xxxv} are also important. Just as French citizens were not ready for surrendering sovereignty of their nation-states when they voted on the European Constitution, so the first-generation immigrants are not prepared to give up their national identities in exchange for a citizenship card, or even in exchange for economic benefits. As Gaspard notes, the value of citizenship depends on not only on laws of a particular country, but also on the attitude of citizens themselves. For example, for many young people in France citizenship has become “not a matter of deep emotion but a license to thumb their noses at authority.”^{xxxvi}

The current debate on accepting new immigrants resonates with the endless debates on accepting new EU members. Firstly, just as the formal admission of the Central and Eastern European countries in the EU was the only way to ensure long-term stability in the region, so the inclusion of immigrants in the host-country’s political and economic life is the only way to provide their peaceful coexistence with the natives. Secondly, just as in the early 1990s the Western European countries felt obligation to help their poorer neighbors in the Central and Eastern Europe,^{xxxvii} so the former empires (especially Spain, Britain and France) have imperial guilt toward immigrants from their former colonies. Thirdly, just as the EU original member-countries harbored “initial suspicion of the newcomers”^{xxxviii} complaining about the costs of enlargement and hesitating to grant the new members full EU membership rights,^{xxxix} so ordinary

European citizens complain about the costs of integrating immigrants into their communities and routinely discriminate. Finally, both the European enlargement and the immigration policy involve a difficult question of “where to draw the line.”^{xl} Just as it was necessary to decide the number and characteristics of the future EU members, so it is necessary to limit the number of incoming immigrants.

These similarities suggest that the history of the EU could prove instructive in solving immigration problems of the EU members. Although “the tension between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism” is omnipresent, the EU now encompasses 27 states, has established the EU law that is supreme over national law, and even confers rights on the individuals.^{xli} This development took over fifty years, and throughout that time the Union’s architects had to act wisely and ask for very little, accepting that as the EU required incoming members to change, so the new members will keep changing the EU. Anti-EU sentiments have always originated from “sections of population that were not taking part in the economic boom,”^{xlii} and it is the resultant economic success that has convinced the European countries time and again that the integration should continue. Anti-immigrant sentiments, too, originate in economically disadvantaged areas; therefore, economic success will help convince citizens that immigrants are beneficial members of their community and present no danger to their national identity.

ⁱ Mark Mazower, *The Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 322.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 347.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joel Krieger, “Britain: Representation and Participation,” in Kesselman and Krieger, *European Politics in Transition*, ed. 5 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 186-202 (197).

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- iv Mazower, 326.
- v Joel Krieger, "Britain: Political Economy and Development," in Kesselman and Krieger, *European Politics in Transition*, ed. 5 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 151-170 (162).
- vi *Ibid.*, 162.
- vii Mark Kesselman, "France: The Making of the Modern French State," in Kesselman and Krieger, *European Politics in Transition*, ed. 5 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 215-233 (215).
- viii *Ibid.*, 231.
- ix Mark Kesselman, "France: Representation and Participation," in Kesselman and Krieger, *European Politics in Transition*, ed. 5 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 268-287 (282).
- x Mazower, 347.
- xi Joel Krieger, "Britain: Political Economy and Development," 157
- xii Joel Krieger, "Britain: Political Economy and Development," 159.
- xiii *Ibid.*, 158.
- xiv Joel Krieger, "Britain: Representation and Participation," 198.
- xv Joel Krieger, "Britain: Political Economy and Development," 156.
- xvi *Ibid.*, 158.
- xvii *Ibid.*, 160.
- xviii *Ibid.*, 158.
- xix Mark Kesselman and John Krieger, "Introduction" in Kesselman and Krieger, *European Politics in Transition*, 5th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 1-35 (29-30).
- xx Mazower, 349.
- xxi Mark Kesselman and John Krieger, "Introduction," 32.
- xxii Mark Kesselman and John Krieger, "Introduction," 38 -39.
- xxiii Gaspard, 99.
- xxiv Joel Krieger, "Britain: Representation and Participation," 194.
- xxv Erik Jones, "The European Economy and Economic Governance" in Tiersky and Jones, *Europe Today*, 3rd ed., 283-216, (306).
- xxvi Joel Krieger, "Britain: Representation and Participation," 194.
- xxvii Mark Kesselman, "France: Representation and Participation," 282.
- xxviii *Ibid.*, 272.
- xxix *Ibid.*, 273.
- xxx *Ibid.*, 272.
- xxxi Mazower, 349.
- xxxii Ronald Tiersky and Nicolas de Boisgrollier, "France: Hope and Fears of a New Generation" in Tiersky and Jones, *Europe Today*, 3rd ed., 21-56, (44).
- xxxiii Gordon Allport, "Nature of Prejudice" (1954), in Kelman, "The interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National identities: the Role of the Other in existential conflicts," *Journal of Social Issue*, vol. 55, No. 3, 1999, 581-600 (852-53).
- xxxiv George T. Crane, "Economic Nationalism: Bringing the Nation Back In," *Millennium*, v. 27, 1, 1998, 69.
- xxxv Mark Kesselman and John Krieger, "Introduction," 17.
- xxxvi Gaspard, 87.
- xxxvii John Van Oudenaren, "EU Enlargement: The Return to Europe" in Tiersky and Jones, *Europe Today*, 3rd ed., (343-368), 347.

^{xxxviii} Graham Bowley, “The New Central and Eastern European Member States in 2004” in Tiersky and Jones, *Europe Today*, 3rd ed., 369-405, (397).

^{xxxix} *Ibid.*, 397.

^{xl} John Van Oudenaren, “EU Enlargement: The Return to Europe,” 347.

^{xli} John Van Oudenaren, “EU Enlargement: The Return to Europe,” 248; Imelda Maher, “EU Law,” in Tiersky and Jones, *Europe Today*, 3rd ed., 317-342 (323).

^{xlii} Graham Bowley, “The New Central and Eastern European Member States in 2004,” 391.