Module 06: A European Crisis? Demographics and Immigration

Context

The French Riots of 2005

On Thursday, October 27, 2005, after the deaths of two teenagers in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois, youth from immigrant families around Paris took to the streets to protest, among other things, their treatment at the hands of French authorities, their economic and social marginalization, and their lack of future prospects. The revolt in the *banlieues*, as the poverty-stricken, largely immigrant French suburbs are called, set off a series of riots that quickly spread from Paris to large cities throughout France and to the French *département* of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean. By the first week of November, youths from immigrant families throughout France fought nightly running battles with the French riot troops as thousands of cars burned in the streets. On November 8, President Jacques Chirac, determined to quell the revolt, invoked an emergency law — last used in 1955 during the Algerian conflict — to impose a nationwide curfew. The following morning, the important French newspaper *Le Monde* opined, "Exhuming a 1955 law sends to the youth of the suburbs a message of astonishing brutality: that after 50 years France intends to treat them exactly as it did their grandparents." The riots continued intermittently throughout the next week before exhausting themselves. In the end, the violence was largely confined to property: demonstrators destroyed almost 9,000 vehicles, and authorities estimated property damage at over 200 million Euros. The riots also thrust immigration to the forefront of the political debate in France. To understand the complex issue that is immigration, historians must first realize how demographics shape history.

Demography

The word demography comes from the Greek *demos*, meaning people, and *graphy*, meaning writing. In its modern usage, demography has come to mean the study of populations and, particularly, the statistical study of population characteristics, such as birth and death rates, age and sex distributions, population densities, and patterns of health and disease, in order to understand long-term changes in human history. Demography is fundamental to the study of history. Fernand Braudel, one of the most important historians of the twentieth century, argued that most of what we consider history — the history of events and people — represents mere "surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs." Demography, by contrast, examines the

trends that shape our history in ways that we often fail to comprehend. The debate over immigration is, at its core, a political debate over national belonging, and one that takes place on top of demographic tectonic shifts that we notice only during abrupt historical events, such as the French riots of 2005. In order to analyze the political and social aspects of the immigration issue, historians must first uncover what demographic trends can tell us about immigration in the past, and, more subtly, what they tell us about trends in the future. This module, therefore, asks you to analyze the demographic data of three European countries from the early 1950s to the present, and as projected into the near future.

The Debate Over Citizenship

The rioting in France was not an isolated incident; the unrest merely represents a recent, spectacular example of one of the most profound issues confronting post-World War II Europe: immigration. Immigration is a complex issue, one that involves economics, demographics, policy, and prejudice. At its heart, immigration has become a debate over citizenship. Who should be included in the nation? Who should be entitled to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship? And, conversely, who should not — or, more consequentially, who cannot — belong to the nation? In historical terms, the very notion of citizenship is relatively new. Citizenship emerged as a product of the modern nation-state after the French Revolution, and it defined who belonged to the nation. Citizenship and definitions of the rights and responsibilities of citizens ranged widely from country to country over the course of the nineteenth century. Yet two older legal principles provided a base from which countries could construct a viable citizenship: *Jus Sanguinis* and *Jus Soli*.

Jus Sanguinis Versus *Jus Soli*

Jus Sanguinis means, literally, "right of blood." In this form, citizenship is bestowed on individuals by right of birth to parents who are citizens. Under citizenship laws that hew closely to this principle, as Germany's did until 2000, children born of German lineage outside of Germany, even generations later, were still entitled to German citizenship by virtue of being "culturally" or "genetically" German. Conversely, children born to non-German citizens on German soil had little recourse to German citizenship. *Jus Soli*, on the other hand, means "right of soil." Under this principle, citizenship is granted by virtue of being born in a certain country. France provides the clearest and the most expansive example of *Jus Soli*: residents born in France are automatically eligible for citizenship. Even more importantly, since France incorporated many of its colonies into the state as individual departments (provinces), many French citizens gained citizenship

because they were born on French soil in the colonies. France also granted citizenship to the children of French citizens regardless of citizenship based on the *Jus Sanguinis* principle. Most countries, like the United Kingdom, adopted citizenship laws that drew from both principles. The United Kingdom's immigration laws are quite complex, due to its former role as an imperial power and its relations with the "old" and "new" Commonwealth. Increasingly over the postwar period, the U.K. placed more stringent controls on immigration by tightening its definition of citizenship.

Migration From Eastern Europe

At the end of the Second World War, Europe experienced one of the largest surges of immigration in human history. As the Red Army pushed westward, millions of ethnic Germans were forced East of the Oder and Neise rivers. Millions of other ethnic minorities in Eastern European countries were evicted from their land in organized and unorganized attempts to create ethnically homogeneous states. In the first two years after the war, approximately ten million people migrated from their ancestral homes, often under duress. Many settled in the West, among them approximately seven million ethnic Germans, who settled in West Germany.

The Golden Years

The economic expansion of the postwar period led to a fundamental shift in immigration patterns. During the war, much of Europe's industrial plants had been destroyed, as had millions of homes. Rationing remained a way of life even after the war, and unemployment continued at high rates. During the fifties, the situation changed dramatically. The Korean War boom that began in the early fifties led to an unprecedented economic expansion that lasted until the oil crisis of 1973. The golden years, as they became known, transformed Europe in profound ways. Whereas Europe had been a continent of emigration through much of the nineteenth century, it became a continent of immigration in the second half of the twentieth century.

Immigration and the Colonies

The three most populous countries in Europe — France, Germany, and the United Kingdom — saw widespread immigration beginning in the 1950s. Yet their respective histories shaped the ways these patterns of immigration emerged. Although France and Great Britain were divested of most of their colonial territories in the fifties and sixties, colonial ties remained and former colonial

subjects exercised their right to immigrate to Europe. Germany, on the other hand, lost its colonies after the First World War; as a result, its postwar immigration was defined more by economic necessity than by colonial ties.

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom had very little in the way of immigration law in the first half of the twentieth century. In the late fifties, a substantial number of so-called "coloured" citizens from Commonwealth nations (former colonies) such as India, Pakistan, and Jamaica immigrated to cities like London and Manchester. As a result of popular xenophobia, the British passed a new immigration law in 1962 that stripped Commonwealth citizens of British citizenship. This did not, however, prevent substantial immigration. Over the following two decades, the British passed tighter and tighter citizenship laws that further restricted the right to British citizenship.

France

In France, the colonies were even more significant in defining postwar immigration. The French and British empires differed both in their administration of their respective colonies and in how each country imagined its imperial role. Several of France's colonies were directly absorbed into the nation as departments, including France's largest and most important colony, Algeria, against which France fought a particularly brutal war of decolonization between 1954 and 1962. At the conclusion of the Algerian War, France signed the Evian Accords and abandoned Algeria, which led to an exodus of one million European settlers by the end of the year and a large number of Algerians who had collaborated with the French colonial administration (Harkis). Even after Algeria gained its independence, large numbers of Algerians immigrated to the French mainland. Indeed, French immigration consisted of a complex mix of southern Europeans (mainly from Portugal and Spain) recruited as laborers and migrants from the former North African colonies. As in most other continental European countries, the economic depression that ended the "Golden Age" in 1974 led to a halt in legal immigration. Immigration transformed after 1974 from mostly young male laborers to family reunification, which proved much more difficult to curb. In the 1980s, a vehemently anti-immigrant politics emerged in France under the racist politician Jean-Marie Le Pen. The movement peaked in the early 1990s but remains a potent force in French politics today.

Germany

German immigration patterns differed substantially from those of the United Kingdom and France due both to its lack of colonial immigration and to its quite limited notion of citizenship. Despite the devastation of the Second World War, Germany reached full employment by the middle of the fifties and began importing workers for industrial and agricultural labor. In the fifties and sixties, Germany set up labor recruitment programs in a number of countries. The so-called "guest workers" came first from Italy, Spain, and Portugal and later from Turkey and Yugoslavia. While many of the early guest workers from southern Europe did, in fact, return to their countries of origin, millions of immigrants — particularly a large contingent of Turks that had been recruited after 1967 — refused to return when Germany halted immigration in 1974. In the seventies and eighties, as the Germans loudly proclaimed that they were not a country of immigration, family reunification programs for the legal immigrants recruited in the preceding period were quickly transforming Germany into a *de facto* country of immigration. Yet unlike Britain and France, non-Germans were not entitled to naturalization. As a result, many second- and even third-generation guest workers were still not citizens. The strict adherence to *Jus Sanguinis* remained in force until 2000.

Immigration and the European Union

The 1990s saw a new phase in the history of immigration to Europe. As the European Union became more and more integrated, immigration policy became increasingly important and increasingly international. After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989-1991, Europe experienced a series of refugee influxes; East Germans flooded West Germany, and many Eastern Europeans moved west in search of a higher standard of living. More significantly, the Balkan Wars (1991-2001) led to successive waves of refugees from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Increasingly, immigrants from the "Third World" also began arriving in European countries seeking asylum. The waves of immigration, along with a series of agreements that dispensed with border controls between EU countries (the Schengen Agreement, the Treaty of Amsterdam), led to what has been termed "Fortress Europe." Increasingly, immigration policy in Europe aims at liberalization of immigration within Europe and solid resistance against individuals from outside of Europe.

Future Demographic Trends

Despite the implementation of "Fortress Europe" over the past decade, the future of immigration in Europe seems clear from population projections. As Europe became more prosperous, especially since the 1960s, the rate of reproduction dropped precipitously as Europeans chose to have fewer children. If such a pattern does not change dramatically, Europe will be left with few choices. It can adopt the anti-immigrant stance of the political far Right, such as that of Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, which would lead to a drastic decline in population, particularly in countries like Italy and Germany. Or it can find new ways to incorporate immigration into its definition of citizenship and national belonging. This, in many ways, will be the most important debate in Europe over the next fifty years. If Europe is to avoid the kind of explosive unrest that gripped France in 2005, it must come to terms with the fundamental demographics underlying and shaping everyday events.