
Book Review

Andrew Geddes & Peter Scholten (2016) *The Politics of Migration and Immigration in Europe*. 2nd edition. Los Angeles; London; New Delhi; Singapore; Washington DC; Melbourne: SAGE. 270 pages.

The question of migration and the debate around it have become focal points of the European agenda since the refugee crisis of 2015. The responses to the crisis formulated by the affected countries' governments have diverged around two main approaches. While some governments stressed the importance of responsibility sharing and a common European solution to the challenge, emphasising the importance of awareness raising about global conflicts and inequalities, others labelled the refugee crisis as a threat to the domestic labour markets, and an unmanageable national and European security issue.

The authors argue that if we wish to understand the underlying mechanisms behind these opposing approaches - looking beyond the current political responses towards the crisis - international migration should be analysed as part of a much broader and more complex question. The countries' individual reactions shaped by their historical immigration and emigration patterns, the various forms of international migration (family migration, labour migration, migration for studying purposes, or migration to seek refuge) characteristic of the different countries, and the question of convergence between the migration policy of the EU and its member states are simultaneously part of this question. The main objective of the book is to present how migration and integration policies were developed - and shaped in different European countries and at the EU level.

The novelty of the book lies in changing the approach in two ways. First, it does not only focus on the policy responses of the EU and its member states on international migration, but it also assesses how these policy decisions influence migration itself.

As the authors argue, reversing the analytical focus may contribute to a deeper understanding of how international migration is shaped (p. 4). Second, - besides Northern and Western Europe - the authors include Central Eastern and Southern European countries in their investigation, supply the readership with a highly comprehensive picture about the studied phenomenon. Countries covered by the different chapters are: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy and Spain, Greece and Turkey, as well as the group of Central and Eastern European countries.

While thoroughly expounding the immigration and integration policies of the examined countries, the authors highlight four central questions.

The *first* topic reflects the idea whether or not European immigration policies have also become European Union policies. The authors argue that the EU shapes the environment within which European immigration and integration policies come to life, and simultaneously the independent strategies of the member states also construct EU-level policy. The role of the EU in this respect can be grasped along two main

dimensions: (1) the ‘institutionalisation of Europe’, and (2) the ‘Europeanisation of institutions’. (p. 238)

The ‘institutionalisation of Europe’ dimension describes how EU policies are developed, and how the attitudes of the member states towards migration play a crucial role in shaping the common framework. The question of free movement of labour or intra-EU mobility, for instance, also belongs to this scheme, which was and continues to be an essential aspect of EU migration debates throughout the past decade. Nonetheless, as the authors have repeatedly highlighted, the most explicit manifestation of this dimension is linked to the question of external border controls and border security. The development of the Schengen Area and the renegotiated temporary border controls and restrictions after the 2015 refugee crisis illustrate how member states have the potential either to broaden or tighten the commonly accepted framework depending on the given situation.

Discussing the dimension of ‘Europeanisation of institutions’ the authors elaborate how EU measures regarding immigration make their way into the domestic politics of the member states. The perception of these directives among member states is far from being alike. In the UK, the Netherlands and France the concept of free movement of labour and the EU’s immigration policies became a central target of Eurosceptic and populist parties and provided a fertile soil for them to exploit the current ‘anti-immigrant sentiment’. At the same time in Southern Europe (particularly in Spain) EU measures were generally welcomed and embraced in domestic politics, while Central-Eastern European countries have heavily criticised the EU position about the quota system and responsibility sharing in response to the refugee crisis. (p 238)

In the *second* core analytical part of the book, the different driving forces of domestic immigration and immigrant politics are discussed. In recent years the expansion of extreme-right wing and populist parties became widespread all over Europe, which indirectly impacts governments proposing more restrictive measures regarding immigration.

The authors illustrate the phenomenon by highlighting the increasing popularity of the French Front National, the British UKIP, and the Dutch Freedom Party. All these parties managed to merge the question of immigration with national security issues, and they blame European integration as being the major source of the ‘problem’.

The third analytical part argues that immigrant policies are, after all, local. Immigrant policies are mostly decentralised at the local level, and unlike immigration policy the ‘EU signal directing convergence in immigrant policies is not strong’. (p. 241) At the local level the integration of immigrants does not follow group specific measures predefined on ‘higher’ levels, it attempts to assist the process of integration through traditional channels, such as providing access to education, offering employment and housing opportunities. To underline the importance of municipalities in the implementation process of immigration policies, the authors give the example of the French Fond’s d’Action Sociale regional offices. These local offices are targeting diverse multi-ethnic neighbourhoods with assistance, by finding adequate responses to the challenges that are present at the local level.

Last, but not least the authors reflect on the question whether the establishment of common European and EU immigration policies is conceivable in the current state of affairs. They conclude that European immigration policies are ‘channelled’ in the analysed countries’ national contexts and can only be understood if ‘we pay attention to national particularities’. (p. 242) For instance, British, French, Dutch and German immigration politics can only be comprehensively analysed if we bear in mind the colonial and post-colonial linkages, the active post-war labour recruitment movements, while in the case of the Southern European countries we must account for the importance of the informal economy in shaping irregular migration. Referring to Peixoto’s (2012) paper *‘Immigrants, markets and policies in Southern Europe: the making of an immigration model?’* the authors argue that ultimately two migration regimes can be identified in Europe: the Northern and the Southern models.

Convergence between the two regimes at the current state of affairs is not likely for two reasons. Firstly, migration patterns developed differently within these two models. Secondly, – and perhaps more importantly – for the sake of converging migration politics it would be crucial that Southern (as well as the Central-Eastern) economies catch up with their Northern counterparts. Without rapid economic growth and development in the South and East, the idea of a common migration policy remains only an over-ambitious vision.

The book of Geddes and Scholten fills a gap within the literature on European migration and immigration policy. On the one hand, the covered geopolitical regions (North-West Europe, Central-Eastern Europe and Southern Europe) enable a comprehensive and rich overview of the development of the European migration processes. On the other hand, the analysis clearly describes the synergies between the member states and the EU in the scope of developing and implementing migration policies.

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References

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