Politics of Immigration Policy

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Abstract

In this essay, I first describe the foundational research that focuses on host or receiving states and the policies that determine states' openness to immigration and to immigrant integration. This research privileges domestic actors and institutions in the choice of immigration policy. In the following section, I outline the research that disaggregates both dimensions of immigration policy into component parts. For immigration control, these include skilled migration, unskilled migration, undocumented migration, and border control. For immigrant integration, this includes labor market integration, family reunification, and access to citizenship, among other policies. The focus on receiving states remains strong but is now complemented by research on sending states' policies toward emigrants. I also outline significant efforts by scholars to construct datasets that would allow researchers to evaluate the hypotheses generated by case studies. In the final section, I argue that, despite advances in the research agenda, there is a continuing paucity of quantitative data that would allow researchers to adjudicate among plausible hypotheses. Moreover, even where data are available, the data are generated by wealthy Western democracies about Western democracies. We have little systematic, cross-national time series data on the rest of the world. I offer a generic concept, "politicians' incentives," that provides one way of bridging the gap between our understanding of the politics of immigration policy in wealthy Western democracies and other states in the international system that are implicated in global migration patterns and policies.

INTRODUCTION

The research on migration policy has exploded in the past decade. From an initial focus on immigration control in host states, the field has expanded to encompass different immigrant streams, different types of immigrant incorporation, and different societal and state responses to the immigrant presence. In addition, the large and increasing flow of remittances has generated a significant literature on sending states' emigration policies, the role of migration in development, as well as the prospects for international cooperation on migration issues. However, the research remains hostage to a Eurocentric bias that limits our understanding of the politics of immigration policy

globally. Migration is a highly salient political issue in wealthy Western democracies but the salience of migration is certainly not limited to this part of the world. More than half of the individuals living outside of their country of birth live in the global south [United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009].

In this essay, I first describe the foundational research on immigration control and immigrant integration policies that examine the policies of wealthy Western democracies. I then turn to the more recent research that disaggregates both immigration control and immigrant integration into component parts. Although there is no clear date that divides the "first wave" from the "second wave" of research, most of the initial research was published in the 1990s, while most of the research on disaggregated flows and integration policies was published in the 2000s. I note the research that connects migration and development, with an emphasis on the policies of sending states. This, in turn, provides links to a literature that explores efforts of sending and receiving states to cooperate on issues of mutual interest dealing with international migration. This section ends with an overview of efforts to construct cross-national time series data sets that would allow us to adjudicate more clearly among various hypotheses. In the final section, I critique the current literature that continues to be hampered by a "Western" bias, and offer a generic concept, "politicians' incentives," that provides one way of bridging the gap between our understanding of the politics of immigration policy in wealthy Western democracies and other states in the international system that are implicated in global migration patterns and policies.

FOUNDATIONAL RESEARCH

Until fairly recently, the politics of immigration policy has been ignored by political scientists who study international political economy, in favor of a focus on trade, foreign direct investment, and the structure of the international monetary system. Only researchers in the "traditional settler states," comprising the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, developed theories of both immigration control and immigrant integration. In one of the earliest entries on immigration control, John Higham (1955) attributed US immigration policy to the rise and fall of American "nativism." This tradition is central to more contemporary social scientific research agendas on immigration control that focus on the domestic politics of the recipient states as the primary determinants of immigration policy.

The research expanded considerably in the 1970s, when immigration flows into Europe generated growing controversy, particularly in the aftermath of the oil shock of 1973. The focus shifted away from "traditional settler states" to the "ethnic" states of Western Europe, states that recruited foreign

workers after World War II to help economic reconstruction and which experienced rapid economic growth in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s (Kindleberger, 1967). Case studies were followed by efforts to generalize about the politics of immigration control, those policies that determined the number and type of immigrants states permitted entry. Central to that research agenda is Gary Freeman's (1995) observation that immigration represented a policy arena that produced concentrated benefits (for employers and the immigrants themselves) while spreading the costs to society more broadly. Concentrated benefits permitted employers to overcome problems of collective action to lobby for open immigration policies, while diffuse costs undermined the ability of other societal actors to organize politically to limit immigration. Therefore, immigration control policy could be described as "interest group politics" in which pro-immigration interests were able to sway policy toward large inflows.

This research agenda was embroidered upon by James Hollifield (1992), who focused on the rights of immigrants in liberal democracies and the role of the courts in expanding immigration intakes beyond what states might otherwise adopt. Christian Joppke (2003a) coined the term "unwanted immigration," building upon both Freeman and Hollifield's ideas, to explain why "liberal" states continued to receive migrants, despite a backlash from the host country population. In Joppke's explanation, states "self-limited" their sovereignty. Alternatively, the "gap hypothesis" was developed by Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield (1994) and Cornelius, Tsuda, Martin, and Hollifield (2004) to describe the inability of states to control their borders. Both sides of this debate viewed states as "losing control" over immigration flows. Other scholars pointed out that states, while imperfectly controlling their borders, were in fact capable of significant control. After all, while levels of trade were large and growing, migration remained relatively stagnant at less than 3% of the global population. Anti-immigrant forces might be playing a significant role after all.

To explain the role of anti-immigrant forces, Jeannette Money (1997, 1999) argued that, because immigrants were geographically concentrated, both pro- and anti-immigrant forces were able to overcome problems of collective action. Local politics were then catapulted to the national level, when restrictionist interests were important for construction of a national political coalition.

Other explanations were proffered, incorporating Marxist and world systems views that connected the structure of the capitalist global economy to migration flows (Castells, 1975; Castles & Kosack, 1973; Petras, 1981; Sassen, 1998). These research agendas also tended to be expansionary in their view of immigration control, as forces of global capitalism drew ever greater numbers of countries and peoples into the web of market exchange.

A few have taken state interests as central to the policy agenda (Rudolph, 2003). The debate over the determinants of immigration control in wealthy Western democracies is nicely summarized by Eytan Meyers (2000, 2004).

As this debate continued, migrant populations began to settle in European societies, giving rise to a second strand of research: the politics of immigrant integration. Although there is a long strand of this research in the United States, now European researchers joined the debate. Hammar (1985) popularized the distinction between immigration control and immigrant integration and described the series of rights that had accrued to migrants in European societies, labeling this status as denizenship. While sociologists attempted to determine the level of immigrant integration, political scientists developed a typology of integration regimes that were believed to structure immigrants' capacities to incorporate into the host state. These included the following models: imperial, ethnic, republican, multicultural, and transnational (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2013). A separate literature that incorporated the demographic characteristics of right wing party supporters along with the impact of globalization developed to explain the rise of radical right, anti-immigrant parties in Europe.

This initial wave of research on the politics of immigration policy has been inconclusive. Much of the research relies on case studies that are very useful for generating hypotheses but much less useful for sorting among competing (or complementary) hypotheses. Where quantitative evidence has been brought to bear (Money, 1999; Rosenblum, 2003, Peters, 2014), it generated a debate over the best way to quantify the concept of "immigration control." The quantitative research on right-wing political party support generated a different concern: Although there is considerable cross-national variation on electoral support for these parties, there is also considerable longitudinal variation which is not captured in the analyses that focus primarily on the recent past but fail to incorporate the earlier period when immigration levels were rising but failed to trigger electoral support for these radical right parties.

Moreover, the focus has been on Europe or, more broadly, wealthy Western democracies, without explicitly recognizing that more than half of those who live outside their country of origin are located in the global south.

CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

Research in the 1980s and 1990s focused primarily on broad concepts of immigration control and secondarily on immigrant integration. In the 2000s, the research has exploded by disaggregating those broad concepts into component parts. Research on immigration control now includes separate strands of literature addressing high-skilled immigration flows; family

reunification; asylum seekers; low-skilled immigration, undocumented migration and border security; and third-party providers of immigration control, survival migration, and the securitization of immigration. Table 1 provides a list of the various research issues and some central citations in each area. The breadth of the literature is now so large that it is impossible to summarize the various strands briefly.

The politics of immigrant integration has been disaggregated as well. Andrew Geddes and Jan Nielsen (2005) were instrumental in developing a set of five integration indicators and organizing a panel of experts to classify European countries on these five indicators: labor market integration, security of residence, access to nationality, access to social welfare, and family reunification. This task has been taken up and extended by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group, which now provide data on 148 integration indicators for 34 Western democracies. The broad categories of immigrant integration include the five indicators listed along with indicators for access to education, political participation, and antidiscrimination [Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), 2014]. Gary Freeman (2004) suggests that each dimension of incorporation may be dictated by different policy coalitions. If so, the integration typologies developed in the 1990s may turn out to have little value.

Finally, interest has turned to sending states. The primary emphasis has been on migrant remittances and their impact on development but the research agenda has expanded to include questions about the role of migration in development more broadly (UNDP, 2009). There is considerable enthusiasm and optimism in much of the research but some cautionary research that suggests a dark side of migration and development is also surfacing (Castles *et al.*, 2013; Czaika & de Haas, 2013; De Haas & Vezzoli, 2013). Emigration, this research suggests, drains a country of its most talented and energetic populations and reduces political pressures for reform. Migrants, they argue, will contribute to development only after poor country governments institute domestic political and economic reforms that generate incentives for migrants to participate in the home economy (Castles *et al.*, 2013).

The research has also expanded to include an interest in migrant rights and the potential for international cooperation between sending and receiving states. Ruhs and Chang (2004) point out that, unlike other international economic flows, migrants receive a bundle of rights when they enter the host state, although that bundle varies across countries and even within countries based on migration status. Justin Gest *et al*. (2013) generate a framework for analyzing the determinants of that migrant rights structure. The protection of migrant rights is one issue that might form the basis for international cooperation but there is little consensus on the prospects for cooperation among

Table 1
Immigration Policy Research Disaggregated by Issue Area

High-skilled immigration flows	Cerna, L. (2014). Attracting high-skilled immigrants: Policies in comparative perspective. *International Migration*, *52*(4) (forthcoming). Cerna, L., & Boucher, A. (2014). Current policy trends in skilled immigration policy. *International Migration*, *52*(4) (forthcoming).
Family reunification	Lahav, G. (1997). International versus national constraints in family-reunification migration policy. *Global Governance*, *3*(3), 349–372.
Asylum seekers	Thielemann, E. R., & Dewan, T. (2006). The myth of free-riding: Refugee protection and implicit burden-sharing. *West European Politics*, *29*(2), 351–369.
Undocumented migration and border security	Andreas, P. (2003). Redrawing the line: Borders and security in the 21st century. *International Security*, *28*(2), 78–111. Koslowski, R. (2010). Towards an international regime for mobility and security? In K. Tamas & J. Palme (Eds.) *Globalizing migration regimes*: *New challenges to transnational cooperation*. Burlinton, VT: Ashgate.
Third-party providers of immigration control	Lahav, G., & Guiraudon, V. (2006). Actors and venues in immigration control: Closing the gap between political demands and policy outcomes. *West European Politics*, *29*(2), 201–223.
Survival migration	Betts, A. (2013). *Survival migration*. *Failed governance and the crisis of displacement*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Securitization of migration	Adamson, F. (2006). Crossing borders: International migration and national security. *International Security*, *31*(1), 165–199. Andreas, P. (2003). Redrawing the line: Borders and security in the 21st century. *International Security*, *28*(2), 78–111. Chebel d'Appollonia, A., & Reich, S. (2008). *Immigration*, *integration*, *and security*. *America and Europe in comparative perspective*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press. Weiner, M. (1995). *The global migration crisis*. *Challenge to states and to human rights*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

states in the international system (Betts 2011; Gamlen & Marsh, 2011; Hansen, Koehler, & Money, 2011; Koslowski, 2011; Kunz, Lavenex, & Panizzon, 2011). Given the structure of migration flows and the distribution of power in the international system, bilateral cooperation is more likely in the issue area, rather than regional or multilateral cooperation (Money & Lockhart, 2012).

Efforts to understand the politics of immigration policy have taken a behavioral turn, with a focus on public attitudes toward immigration (Goldstein & Peters, 2014; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007, 2010). Are citizens' economic interests central to their attitudes toward migrants? Research is not entirely consistent but suggests that although individual economic interests track immigration attitudes, nationalism and national identity are central components of individual attitudes toward immigration and immigrants. However, there is considerable work to do to tie citizen attitudes to actual policy outcomes, whether it is support for radical right anti-immigrant parties or for actual migration policies.

The research has also become more scientific in the sense that researchers are investing considerable energy in constructing datasets that would allow for a quantitative evaluation of the various hypotheses (see, e.g., Ruhs, 2013). The European Union finances some of this research, such as the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) and the Citizenship Observatory at the European University Institute. Other efforts are still under way, such as the IMPALA project (International Migration Policy and Law Analysis database), directed by Michael Hiscox (Beine *et al.*, 2014) and we can hope to see the fruits of this labor in the near future.

One example of research that has advanced from case studies in Europe to global quantitative analysis is nationality policy. Nationality or citizenship policy is defined by state laws governing access to citizenship through birth and/or naturalization. Tremendous variation exists among states and over time. The initial case study work by Brubaker (1990) and Joppke (2003b) focused on Europe and the European experience. Brubaker argued that the challenges of nation building in France and Germany shaped "national self-understandings" that were then transformed into "ethnic" and "civic" patterns of citizenship law. Ethnic citizenship laws are based on *jus sanguinis* policies that attribute citizenship to children based on the citizenship of the parents, whereas civic citizenship laws permit birth on the territory to play an important role in citizenship status (*jus soli*). Joppke emphasized that citizenship laws are not static and attributed the direction of the change, more or less restrictive, to the political coalition in power, right or left.

Howard (2009) took up the challenge and developed a Citizenship Policy Index that incorporates three dimensions of citizenship laws and coded them for 15 European states at two time points. He used these data points to illuminate more systematically the origins of citizenship policy (colonial experience

and early democracy) and the determinants of change in citizenship policy (issue salience and the political coalition in power). Seely (2007), Bertocchi and Strozzi (2010), and Money and Western (2014) have generated regional and global indicators of citizenship policy and have employed these indicators to develop and evaluate theories of citizenship policy that are global, rather than theories that rely on the experience of European democracies. Although the research has not achieved consensus, the trajectory is positive.

These new waves of research are richer than the first wave of research, generating more nuanced hypotheses that are better evaluated empirically. However, because the broad topics of immigration control and immigrant integration have been disaggregated, the research is also more scattered, making it difficult to reaggregate our understanding of the politics of immigration policy at the level of the nation-state, which remains the primary actor in this policy arena (although see Rosenblum, 2000). Moreover, there is a continued focus on wealthy Western democracies, in part because data on these issues are actually available and can be incorporated into datasets for analysis.

Finally, there is a tendency to chase after events rather than to understand the underlying dynamics that connect global markets, states, domestic politics, and migration flows. The research on high-skilled migration, for example, followed the implementation of state policies to attract high-skilled migrants, rather than predicting the competition for highly skilled immigrants; that is, researchers observed that states were modifying their policies and only then sought to explain these changes. Another example is the focus on family reunion policy. This avenue of continuing migration into Europe after the "immigration stop" of the early 1970s was observed before analysts began to try and explain this flow. Good theory should both explain and predict. We still do not have a good picture of how all the parts fit together and what we can anticipate and predict.

KEY ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research has the opportunity to build on the advances made in the past 10 to 15 years. It must do so in two important ways. First, the research needs to expand the coverage to migration policy globally. Migration is a highly salient political issue in wealthy Western democracies but the salience of migration is certainly not limited to this part of the world. More than half of the individuals living outside of their country of birth live in the global south (UNDP, 2009). Policies in both host and home state play a large role in determining the quality of life for migrants and migrants affect both host countries and countries of origin. Therefore, our efforts to generate datasets must include all countries of the globe even though it may be more difficult to

generate data from some countries of the global south. The same efforts that go into collecting and coding laws in the West should be extended globally, incorporating scholars from developing countries into the research agenda. We need both cross-national and longitudinal data to evaluate the origins of and change in immigration policy in all countries. Case studies are extraordinarily useful for process tracing and for understanding the mechanisms that connect the explanatory variables with the *explanandum*—the immigration policy we are trying to explain. But we need to sort among generic political processes and those that are unique to specific countries.

Second, we need to construct theory to take into account different political processes in countries around the globe. Country experts in the global south are beginning to generate theory via case studies (see, in particular, many articles published in *International Migration Review* and *International Migration*). These case studies should inform theory development so that we better understand political processes in countries other than established democracies. These can include democracies that do not adopt the same left–right political dimension visible in the wealthy Western democracies. New democracies and various types of autocracies have different political actors with different policy preferences. And we have little knowledge of the sense of "nationality" and "identity" in the developing world that plays a large role in understanding attitudes toward migrants in Western democracies. For example, what are attitudes toward immigrants in sub-Saharan African states? Do Africans develop national identities similar to Europeans even though their state boundaries were arbitrarily drawn by colonial powers without regard to the ethnic groups contained therein?

One way of proceeding is to think more generically in terms of politicians' incentives to permit migration and to incorporate immigrants. Societal actors have preferences for the level of immigration and the degree of immigrant integration. Domestic political institutions structure the power of the various societal actors. These can then be understood in terms of the costs and benefits various policy choices generate for politicians. Bertocchi and Strozzi (2010) provide one example of the set of incentives politicians face in light of societal preferences on nationality policy (also see Money & Western, 2014). This concept could bridge the research on societal attitudes on immigration to the policy choices of states. And it also provides a generic framework that travels across the range of domestic political regimes. Politicians' incentives may well be the fundamental building blocks of the politics of immigration policy, writ globally.

The research agenda on the politics of immigration policy has expanded in several fruitful directions in the past 15 years. Yet we have a long way to travel. Theory development needs to move past the experiences of wealthy Western democracies to other regions of the globe and other types of political

institutions. Politicians' incentives may be a fruitful way of drawing together our theoretical understanding of these political processes. Finally, we must generate global cross-national and time series datasets to evaluate theory and separate the wheat from the chaff.

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FURTHER READING

There are several review essays that are well worthwhile in obtaining a variety of lenses on the state of the research. Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2013) provide a broad look at both theory and empirics of the migration process, concentrating on the post World War II period. Eytan Meyer's (2000) contribution in *International Migration Review* provides a clear summary and evaluation of the theoretical approaches to immigration control. Erik Bleich's (2008) *World Politics* article outlines different types of intellectual contributions provided by researchers and points to the potential for broader contributions by political scientists. Gary Freeman's (2004) article provides a thorough overview of the theoretical literature on immigrant integration; Terri Givens' (2007) article focuses on empirical research on that topic; Jeffrey Reitz (2002) discusses the research agenda and methodological issues. Jeannette Money (2010) provides an overview of comparative immigration policy that addresses primarily the foundational research.

JEANNETTE MONEY SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Jeannette Money is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of California, Davis. Her research agenda focuses on various aspects of immigration policy. She has published a book, *The political geography of immigration control* (Cornell University Press 1999), that explores the political consequences of immigrants' geographic concentration. Her research also examines the prospects for international cooperation on issues of immigration; a coedited volume, *Migration*, *nation states*, *and international cooperation* (Routledge 2011), examines regional cooperation on migration and provides an empirical overview of the types of cooperation and coordination that exist on a regional level. This edited volume is complemented by a second book-length project that describes, classifies, and explains the types of international cooperation that exist on issues of international migration. Dr. Money is currently working on issues of citizenship and naturalization; this research provides an empirical overview of nationality laws globally and evaluates the origins and the determinants of changes in those laws. She is also interested in migrant participation in the host polity and has written some articles on the influence of migrants on the host country's foreign policy toward the migrants' home country.

  http://ps.ucdavis.edu/people/fzmoney
  http://migrationcluster.ucdavis.edu/people/affiliate_faculty/index.html

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