

Historical analysis on the evolution of migration and integration narratives

British-French narratives to restrict immigration from the Global South, 1960s-mid-1980s

Emmanuel Comte

BRIDGES Working Papers

#01 November 2021

BRIDGES

Assessing the production and impact of migration narratives

This publication is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101004564.



Contents

ABSTRACT	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. THE INVASION NARRATIVE	6
3. THE DIFFERENCE NARRATIVE	8
4. THE HUMANITARIAN NARRATIVE	11
5. THE OIL-SHOCK NARRATIVE AND THE CRISIS NARRATIVE	20
6. PATTERN	23
7. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTIONS	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY	26

Abstract

This *Working Paper* identifies five prominent transnational narratives in France and the UK that aimed to justify restrictions towards immigrants from the Global South, from the 1960s to the mid-1980s, when both countries turned to restrictive policies structurally. France and the UK were the most exposed to large and autonomous migration flows from the Global South as a result of their former colonial empires. Parliamentary debates in the House of Commons and the French Senate, articles from British, French, and American newspapers, including a local French newspaper, and public speeches allow reporting an invasion narrative, a difference narrative, a humanitarian narrative, an oil-shock narrative, and a crisis narrative. The humanitarian narrative – presenting migrants as victims to protect – and the crisis narrative – putting forward insurmountable economic difficulties to curb immigration – became the most successful to justify state intervention to restrict immigration as they matched native workers' concerns while minimising disturbances within destination countries.

Emmanuel Comte is a Senior Research Fellow in the area of Migrations at CIDOB. A graduate of the École normale supérieure in Paris, he earned a European PhD in the History of Europe and of International Relations *summa cum laude* from Sorbonne University, with a prize-winning thesis on 'The Formation of the European Migration Regime'. He has worked at the European University Institute, the University of California, Berkeley, and the Vienna School of International Studies. His research focuses on the history of European integration and the contemporary history of migration in Europe, aiming to find out when immigration generates disputes and when liberal migration arrangements may occur. He is the author of *The History of the European Migration Regime* (Routledge, 2018) and has also published in *Cold War History*, *Labor History*, *Le Mouvement social*, *Relations internationales*, and the *Journal of European Integration History*.

1. Introduction

1.1. Focus

This *Working Paper* supplies historical depth to BRIDGES' research by investigating five major migration narratives that spread transnationally in post-war Europe and affected migration policies. It is an analysis rather than a synthesis. Historians rarely dissociate narratives on an issue from the broader history of that issue. Therefore, the secondary literature does not allow, within the limits of this project, drawing a synthesis of migration narratives in Europe since 1945. Powerful narratives have included narratives on Cold War refugees and the east-west flow in Europe, guest-workers narratives, or the antiracist narrative accounting for immigration restrictions through racism. These were pro-immigration narratives. Yet, the most prominent narratives and the most relevant to BRIDGES were those attempting, on the contrary, to justify restrictions against immigrants from the Global South in Europe. The two countries facing the bulk of those immigrants were the largest former imperial metropolises: France and the UK. Immigration was largely a consequence of their colonial endeavours in the previous centuries and of the income gap between them and their former colonies. This *Working Paper* focuses on the narratives to justify restrictions against immigrants from the Global South in those two countries in the decisive period from the 1960s to the mid-1980s – when such narratives were rising, and the two countries moved from relative openness to their former colonies' migrants to resolute policies to curb immigration from the Global South. Some narratives that emerged at that time still largely shape European public debates on immigration. As migrants were then mainly men without their families, this *Working Paper* will pay less attention to narratives on female migrants specifically or family reunification, which became more widespread from the 1980s (see Güell and Parella 2021, 10-11).

1.2. Concepts, framework, and relation to the state-of-the-art

In the sources consulted for this investigation, narratives emerged when a large number of people discussed immigration and were more likely to be driven by emotional transportation than by calculations based on detailed data (Green and Brock 2000; 701, Escalas 2007). In parliaments, newspapers, or public speeches, offering simple stories leading to a clear action path was more profitable than accumulating factual information, entering complexity, weighing pros and cons, and making cost/benefit analyses. The promoters of narratives may or may not have carried out such calculations beforehand. Still, by the time they resorted to narratives, they were dressing their positions into simple terms, emotionally loaded, to generate immediate adhesion among decisive actors and achieve policy impact (Braddock and Dillard 2016; Boswell et al. 2021). Eventually, most of these actors equated their positions and reality to their narratives (Jones and McBeth 2010, 330). They typically ignored inconsistency or error signals as long as political support followed or was likely to follow. For migration historians, narratives should not serve to describe the social or political reality they targeted. They should not even help report the considerations that led to rejecting immigrants, even though they could echo some of those considerations. They were only instruments of rejections – simple stories leading to concrete actions, which, directly or indirectly, resulted in restricting immigration. Narratives followed an actantial model allocating roles – victims, villains or enemies, heroes – to manufacture emotions – fear or repulsion – and call for policy actions to remedy an undesirable situation (Jones and McBeth 2010, 340). In this study, we go beyond depicting the representation of immigrants or simply reporting arguments against immigration, such as immigrants being a burden for social security systems or being responsible for crimes. We embed this representation and these arguments into a plot defining roles and causal mechanisms, creating emotional reactions, and leading to policy decisions (King and Wood 2013, 30-31; D'Amato and Lucarelli 2019, 4; Boswell et al. 2021).

1.3. Methodology

We assume that public speeches, parliamentary debates, and newspaper articles were the primary places of expression of articulated migration narratives. For this reason, our primary sources include famous public speeches, parliamentary debates, and databases of digitised newspaper articles. They come from the British House of Commons,¹ the French Senate,² and the Factiva³ and Europresse⁴ databases. Those two databases contain articles from the *Financial Times*, *The Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Le Monde*, and the local French newspaper *Sud-Ouest*.

Online parliamentary debates and the databases of digitised newspaper articles allow searching for documents combining one or several keywords, sometimes with the possibility to select documents in which two of the requested keywords appear in the same sentence or paragraph. As we are looking for narratives to restrict immigration, we searched for documents combining, on the one hand, references to immigration or immigrants and, on the other hand, terms likely to appear in restriction narratives. They include 'clandestine', 'control' or 'irregular.' They also include words pointing at particular problems likely to justify restrictions: 'crime', 'unemployment' or 'wages' – when immigrants may be accused of competing with natives. Therefore, we did not search for predefined narratives but simply for terms likely to appear in immigration restriction narratives. We then analysed the documents and combined them to spot narrative patterns.

Within the tools we consulted we were able to be exhaustive and review all the documents that matched the keywords and time frame. Certainly, a larger study may look for additional keywords, include the other house of each of the two parliaments, include more public speeches, and even include more countries. Overall, debates to restrict immigration from the Global South were fewer in the British parliament and the English-speaking press than in the French parliament and the French press.

1.4. Outline

This method allowed identifying five narratives, to each of which this *Working Paper* devotes one section, except for the last two narratives unified in one section. Even though those narratives were competing and developed across similar time frames, the order in which they appear here corresponds to the trend in public debates, as attested by the chronology of the occurrences of each narrative. The last section identifies the pattern in this development. The narratives that follow are ideal types or sometimes families of narratives rather than monolithic blocs. Not all discourses neatly fell into one particular narrative. Some actors could connect or mix narratives, and there were areas where two narratives could overlap. Yet, this work creates a typology of five narratives, using as the criterion to differentiate narratives the role they assigned to immigrants. We will call each narrative by its most salient feature. Immigrants were enemies in the invasion narrative, strangers in the difference narrative, victims in the humanitarian narrative, or unwelcomed people in destination countries for economic reasons in the oil-shock and crisis narratives – with immigrants having some responsibility for those economic problems in the oil-shock narrative.

-
1. UK parliamentary debates, Hansard online database (accessed in 2021). <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>. Henceforth: UKPD.
 2. Journal officiel de la République française, Compte rendu intégral des séances du Sénat (accessed in 2021). <http://www.senat.fr/seances/comptes-rendus.html>. Henceforth: JORF.
 3. Factiva Database (accessed in 2021). <https://www.dowjones.com/professional/factiva/>.
 4. Europresse Database (accessed in 2021). <http://www.europresse.com/en/>.

2. The invasion narrative

2.1. Content

The first narrative staged immigrants as hostile and threatening. They aimed to dominate natives by force or displace them. In a speech to the Conservative Association in Birmingham, on 20 April 1968, British conservative MP Enoch Powell reported the fear of one of his constituents that, in the UK, ‘in 15- or 20-years’ time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man’ (Powell 1968). In June 1971, French left-wing Senator, former Minister, and future Chancellor of the Institut de France Edouard Bonnefous considered immigrants were ‘in the situation of the former European colonist who went to make his fortune overseas!’ A view his left-wing colleague and former minister Jean Filippi was sharing. Bonnefous also noted ‘a partial substitution of the national working population by immigrants.’⁵ In February 1978, British conservative leader Margaret Thatcher warned that the ‘British character’ was being ‘swamped’ by immigrants (Nossiter 1978a, 1978b). In March 1980, British conservative MP John Carlisle spoke of the ‘arrogance’ of the ‘jet-age migrant who happens to choose these islands as his home.’⁶

Not only immigrants were a danger, but their descendants were as well. In March 1980, Powell was looking for substitutes for the expression ‘the immigrant population’ to include descendants. He considered ‘the coloured population’ or ‘the blacks’, even though he recognised those substitutes were unsatisfactory. Because of high birth rates, he warned this population was ‘steadily’ increasing.⁷

The first narrative staged immigrants as hostile and threatening. They aimed to dominate natives by force or displace them.

Under this narrative, immigrants kept their loyalty to their countries of origin at the expense of the country of destination. For Carlisle, in March 1980, ‘we have cities within our cities; states within our State; a land of divided ethnic loyalties.’ Immigrants ‘owe loyalty to another and an alien regime.’⁸

They aimed to take advantage of the destination country financially and export their proceeds to their countries of origin. French radical-socialist Senator Pierre Barbier repeated in November 1968 and November 1969 that Algerian immigrants aimed to ‘export the maximum amount of money to Algeria’ and ‘are very costly for [the French] social security’ system.⁹ The view of immigrants as a burden for the social security system was part of a broader narrative framework emphasising divided loyalty and the danger of foreign domination.

At borders, the proponents of the narrative depicted scenes of invasion and loss of control. According to journalist Christian Bombédiac in April 1971, French authorities feared ‘a massive invasion’ at the southern border. He went on about immigrants: ‘We chase them on one side, they come back on the other’ (Bombédiac 1971a). Three weeks later, he spoke of ‘a black invasion’ in Irun – a town near the French-Spanish border (Bombédiac 1971b). In the UK, Carlisle considered: ‘We have been subjected to the greatest invasion in the history of this country,’ citing the millions that had come and the millions still to come. As a result, ‘in some of our cities, our own people will be in the minority.’¹⁰

5. JORF, Séance du vendredi 25 juin 1971, p. 1351.

6. UKPD, Immigration rules, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

7. UKPD, Immigration rules, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1010-65.

8. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

9. JORF, Séance du 25 novembre 1968, pp. 1286, 1290, Séance du 27 novembre 1969, pp. 946, 950.

10. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

Immigration was bound to usher in violence. Powell ended his 1968 speech by quoting Sibyl's prophecy of 'wars, terrible wars, and the Tiber foaming with much blood' in Virgil's Aeneid (6, 86-87). 'As I look ahead, he declared, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood"' (Powell 1968). In the same vein, in April and November 1972, French right-wing Senator Jacques Henriot cried: 'It was under the influence of these same immigrant foreigners, once called barbarians, that the Roman Empire crumbled like the traditional pillars of our society are crumbling today.'¹¹ Carlisle forewarned of 'a bloody and civil strife.'¹² In February 1981, French communist leader Georges Marchais declared to thousands in the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis: 'We don't want new Harlems or new Sowetos in the Paris suburbs. We don't want new Chicagos either.' He was referring to the ethnic gangland lawlessness the French associated with these cities (Koven 1981). Here too, the fear of immigrants' crime was part of a broader narrative on immigrants' violence and suspicious loyalty. More radically, in November 1982, the French socialist government considered extending visa requirements to North Africa, citing concerns over terrorism (Marsh 1982).

The reactions the narrative immediately suggested were for the state to exert firm control over immigrants, encourage them to return to their countries of origin, and reduce new immigration to zero. According to Powell, 'The natural and rational first question' when confronted with 'such a prospect is to ask: "How can [this problem's] dimensions be reduced?" ... The answers ...: by stopping ... further inflow, and by promoting the maximum outflow.' He went on with emotive rhetoric: 'We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependents' (Powell 1968). As for Carlisle, he suggested exerting firm pressure over immigrants, who should abide by British rules, under the principle 'when at Rome, do as the Romans do.'¹³

To sum up the actantial model of this narrative, immigrants were the bad actors. The good actors were the native population. Immigration triggered the risk of losing sovereignty and freedom. The hero was the state bringing the remedy, by resisting invasion and enforcing returns.

2.2. Producers and diffusion

As we could see, a striking finding of this inquiry is that policymakers with widely different ideologies could enter the same narrative. The invasion narrative emerged among some communist, social democratic, and conservative policymakers. As we could also see, the narrative emerged in both France and the UK. Prominent political leaders everything seemed to oppose such as French communist Georges Marchais and British conservative Margaret Thatcher entered this narrative. Are there any clues to be more specific about the producers of this narrative?

When policymakers resorted to it, they were often trying to secure the support of working-class voters. In 1968, Powell referred to his constituent who feared 'the black man will have the whip hand over the white man' as 'a middle-aged, quite ordinary working man employed in one of our nationalised industries' (Powell 1968). He pronounced his speech in Birmingham, a major industrial city with a sizeable working-class component. The speech also echoed the views of London dockers, a thousand of whom went on strike to support Powell in the following days. Other working-class movements in the country coincided with the same objective (Heffer 1999, 462). When Thatcher grasped this narrative, she was wooing Labour Party voters before the 1979 general elections. *The Washington Post's* journalist Bernard D. Nossiter deemed her strategy was successful (Nossiter 1978a, 1978b). Likewise, in France, Marchais' comments echoed the concerns over immigration of the working class

11. JORF, Séance du 25 avril 1972, p. 178, Séance du 27 novembre 1972, pp. 2411-3.

12. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

13. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

in the northern and eastern Paris suburbs – the so-called ‘red belt’ of Paris. Therefore, it appears the producers of the narrative were among working-class voters, who represented such a powerful constituency that any politician, from the left or the right, had to echo their concerns.

Besides working-class voters, producers of the invasion narrative emerged in the state apparatus. In France, the Ministry of the Interior drew attention to the evacuation of Palestinian Liberation Organisation fighters from Beirut to North Africa to justify extending visa requirements to North African countries (Marsh 1982).

The invasion narrative, which often denounced a reversed colonisation, may be closely related to the colonial past of France and the UK. A broader study, including more countries, would likely find a different pattern in countries with a less important colonial past.

2.3. Impact

Inherent flaws limited the policy impact of the invasion narrative. The most serious was that this narrative, far from ensuring security, could raise tensions. After Powell’s so-called ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, in 1968, British Conservative Party leader Edward Heath sacked him from the Shadow Cabinet, in which he was Shadow Secretary of State for Defence (McLean 2001, 129-130). In March 1980, British Labour politician Alexander W. Lyon considered it ‘offensive to suggest that because [people] are black or brown, they are a potential threat to the stability of this nation.’¹⁴ The invasion narrative could encourage natives to attack them and usher in uncontrolled outbursts of violence. On Christmas eve 1980, in Vitry, a south-eastern suburb of Paris, communist strong-arm squads sacked and bulldozed a dormitory housing 318 black African workers from Mali. A week later, the head of the Paris Mosque, Rector Si Hamza Boubakeur, directly connected the event to recent declarations on immigration by communist officials and called on Marchais to condemn the action (Koven 1981).

A significant part of the native population also felt unwell about the racial categories the invasion narrative routinely manipulated. The Times alluded to the racial policies of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust when stating Powell’s speech was ‘the first time that a serious British politician has appealed to racial hatred in this direct way in our post-war history.’¹⁵ An impact of the invasion narrative, however, was to foster the development of alternative narratives that overcame its shortcomings.

3. The difference narrative

3.1. Content

In this narrative, immigrants were not malevolent actors. They were neutral. Problems did not emerge from their hostility or arrogance. Problems were simply an outcome of their difference. For this reason, we refer in this study to this narrative as the ‘difference narrative.’ The difficulty of integrating immigrants because of their differences implied that destination states should restrict immigration. There were a right-wing variant and a left-wing variant of this narrative. The former focused on differences in culture and skin colours, whereas the latter emphasised differences in economic standards.

14. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

15. *The Times*, Editorial comment, 22 April 1968.

In the right-wing variant, the proponents of the difference narrative put forward the differences in culture and skin colours between the destination countries and the immigrants from outside Europe. In the 1967 book *One Hundred Million French People*, published by the Éditions universitaires in Paris, French engineer Robert Delerm called to favour white immigration and systematically reject 'coloured people.' The reason was that only the former could end up identifying with other French people because they had the same colour (Delerm 1967). In April 1970, French journalist Pierre Locardel noted that when immigrants 'came from neighbouring countries, with mentalities and aspirations similar to ours... their assimilation did not pose too many problems.' By contrast, 'the language, customs, habits of blacks and North Africans isolate them in the nation.' Yet, as he continued, the latter were replacing the former among immigrants to France, with their overall number increasing fast. The risk was to 'end up modifying [France's] sociological and human structures' (Locardel 1970).

French right-wing Senator Jacques Henriot repeatedly requested between 1970 and 1973 the government to favour 'Latin' immigrants because 'we were civilised by people who came from Rome, Greece, as were the Spaniards, Portuguese and Italians.' Latin immigrants were 'more particularly and more easily assimilated.'¹⁶ Beyond the reference to 'assimilation', which simply implied similarities, his use of the verb 'civilise' carried the idea this Latin culture was also more advanced than others. Historian Rita Chin has further analysed how Islam came to appear as the central problem of immigration from the late 1980s, citing later comments by French right-wing President Nicolas Sarkozy emphasising western cultural superiority, in relation, among others, to gender roles (Chin 2017, 188, 195, 230).

In the UK too, in March 1980, British conservative MP Tony Marlow observed:

'We have imported 2 million people of a different culture ... I do not say that it is a better culture or a worse culture, that it is an inferior culture or a superior culture; I say simply that it is a different culture.'¹⁷

According to him, if the British people had been able to choose about such immigration, they would have said 'No.' His colleague John Carlisle also put forward that sometimes up to half of immigrants' children were 'totally unable to speak English,' generating serious costs for the British school system and their British classmates.¹⁸ As later theorised by British journalist David Goodhart, similarities among people were the condition for successful taxation and a successful social security system. He argued that the welfare system would have no legitimacy in case of wide differences among people (Goodhart 2004). This narrative integrated the welfare system as an instance in which the difference of immigrants undermined social cohesion and solidarity.

In the left-wing variant, the difference narrative emphasised less differences in cultures than differences in economic standards, which too should justify restricting immigration. For French Senator Edouard Bonnefous, the 'dismal conditions' in which immigrants from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Turkey lived in France came from their lower living standards. As Bonnefous put it, they were not ready to 'accept the price of housing paid by French workers.'¹⁹ This difference triggered social neighbourhood problems between immigrants and natives.

The concern over the recurring race riots in the United States between 1964 and 1969 unified the left-wing and right-wing variants of the difference narrative. Even though those riots were not part of the immigration debate in the United States – but of the civil rights movement – European policymakers

16. JORF, Séance du 19 décembre 1970, p. 3046, Séance du 27 novembre 1972, pp. 2411-3, Séance du 3 décembre 1973, p. 2300.

17. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

18. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

19. JORF, Séance du vendredi 25 juin 1971, p. 1351.

considered immigration could produce those outcomes in Europe. They believed it originated in the existence in the United States of different populations: the descendants of European settlers and the descendants of African slaves. In September 1965, British Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson justified restricting immigration given the racial explosion affecting other countries.²⁰ In November 1972, French right-wing Senator Jacques Henriet too explained US race riots as the result ‘of old calls for the immigration of an African workforce.’²¹ Interestingly here, the left-wing policymaker referred to race and the right-wing representative to economic aspects.

To sum up the actantial model of this narrative, the roles of good and bad actors were blurred. Immigration threatened to usher in social division and the collapse of institutions. Again, the hero was the state, bringing remedy by restricting immigration.

3.2. Producers and diffusion

As we could see, the difference narrative emerged in both France and the UK and on various sides of the political spectrum, even though there were variants on the left and the right. In contrast to the invasion narrative, the difference narrative was less a direct expression of working-class voters. It was a narrative that intermediate actors had refined. These actors took up the basic plan to restrict immigration, but they attempted to justify it by removing the invasion narrative’s most violent features. The author mentioned above, Robert Delerm, was a civil engineer. His book received a supporting preface by the director of population and migration at the French Ministry of Social Affairs.²² There was more investment of specialised knowledge in the production of the narrative. Trade unions also played a role in the production and diffusion of the left-wing variant of the narrative. In the UK, the Trades Union Congress economic committee chair David Basnett focused on the different standards between immigrant and native workers and observed the US predicament. Immigration of Mexican workers may have improved their standards, but they were so much lower than native workers’ standards that this immigration was not desirable for the latter (Basnett 1984).

3.3. Impact

Even though the difference narrative did not assume hostility between immigrants and other groups like the invasion narrative, it still created social tensions in destination countries. Tensions could emerge among citizens – and not only between immigrants and natives – and could undermine territorial cohesion. In November 1967, French right-wing black Senator from Martinique Georges Marie-Anne condemned Delerm’s calls to reject the immigration of ‘coloured people’ because they would never identify with French people. He reminded his colleagues that a majority of French in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guiana, and Reunion were black.²³ Likewise, in March 1980, British Labour politician Alexander W. Lyon argued racist discourses had an offending impact on black people. They ‘have settled in this country, [they] were born in this country and are citizens of it, and [they] expect to live the rest of their lives here.’²⁴ The difference narrative, especially when applied to skin colour, divided citizens in both France and the UK.

For the period we investigate, it is difficult to find legislation or even discourses on the occasion of new legislation openly referring to the difference narrative, especially when it had to do with skin colour.

20. *Sud-Ouest*, 29 septembre 1965, p. 3. See also Powell 1968.

21. JORF, Séance du 27 novembre 1972, pp. 2411-3.

22. JORF, Séance du 27 novembre 1967, p. 1865.

23. JORF, Séance du 27 novembre 1967, p. 1865.

24. UKPD, HC Deb, 10 March 1980, vol 980, cc1066-106.

In April 1970, French journalist Pierre Locardel claimed that ‘giving priority to the white population (Spaniards, Portuguese, Turks, Yugoslavs in part, Eastern countries), assimilable after a generation,’ was a central preoccupation of the government’s efforts in the new immigration policy (Locardel 1970). Yet, there is no evidence of this claim close to decision-making centres. Historian Rita Chin has highlighted the continuation of the difference narrative in the following decades as politicians across Europe kept denouncing the failure of multiculturalism (Chin 2017). Yet, even then, the most detailed expressions of the narrative occurred far away from decision-making centres (Comte 2020). The main impact of this narrative, like for the invasion narrative, was probably to encourage the development of an alternative, more refined narrative that did not present immigrants negatively to avoid the problems related to these narratives.

4. The humanitarian narrative

4.1. Content (1): Immigrants’ victimhood

In striking contrast to the invasion narrative, the humanitarian narrative denied migrants’ agency. Immigrants were voiceless victims, and the narrative frequently resorted to the grammatical use of the passive voice (D’Amato and Lucarelli 2019, 1). The state had to protect them from malevolent actors, who happened to be all those making migration possible – providing transportation, employment, or accommodation in destination countries. There were two variants in this narrative, casting migrants as the victims of a new slave trade or of capitalist exploitation in the Marxist sense. Those two variants differed in the exact role of malevolent actors – slave owners or capitalist exploiters – not in the role of immigrants as victims.

a) Slavery

Typical terms to refer to those who helped migrants travel were ‘traffickers’ and ‘smugglers’ (Boswell, Geddes, and Scholten 2011, 4-5). In French, they also included ‘négriers’, which meant those who traded ‘niggers’, sometimes ‘négriers des temps modernes’ (‘modern-day slave traders’), or ‘marchands d’hommes’ (‘human traffickers’). The narrative called their activity ‘smuggling’, ‘trafic clandestin’ (‘illegal trafficking’), ‘trafic d’hommes’ (‘human trafficking’), or ‘trafic d’esclaves’ (‘slave trade’).²⁵ In October 1970, the local French newspaper *Sud-Ouest* headlined that ‘The slave trade (in French, *la traite*) of Asians to the UK is taking on alarming proportions.’²⁶

‘Smugglers’ or ‘traffickers’ were criminals (İçduygu 2021, 1). According to *Sud-Ouest*, ‘there is no longer any doubt in Scotland Yard that a vast organisation with very many cogs, probably headed by a man of exceptional abilities, orchestrates’ the slave trade of Asians to the UK.’²⁷ In short, irregular immigration to the UK would result from the activities of one criminal network. Seven months later, the newspaper headlined that the police had just dismantled the equivalent network for immigration to France: ‘An African, head of the “ebony wood” traffickers, has been arrested in Barcelona.’ The newspaper presented him as ‘the head of the network that organised illegal immigration of blacks in France.’²⁸

25. JORF, 11 August 1964, p. 981, Séance du 9 décembre 1974, p. 2639. *Sud-Ouest*, 4 September 1972, p. 4, 26 November 1981, p. 26.

26. *Sud-Ouest*, 30 October 1970, p. 4.

27. *Sud-Ouest*, 30 October 1970, p. 4.

28. *Sud-Ouest*, 22 May 1971, p. 24.

The narrative claimed traffickers made high profits when transporting migrants, even though backing generally this claim with little evidence. The narrative's proponents who were the most precise mentioned £300 for an irregular journey to the UK in 1970, equivalent in purchasing power to €5,600 in 2021, 50,000 CFA francs for a trip from Dakar to France (€1,100 in 2021), and 250 French francs to cross the Pyrenees in a taxi (€260 in 2021).²⁹ The higher costs to go to the UK had to do with the fact the origin countries of immigrants in the West Indies or South Asia were farther away. This difference supports the idea the migration pressure was stronger in France.

Traffickers typically deceived migrants. In May 1973, French right-wing Senator Guy Petit, mayor of Biarritz, near the Spanish border, declared in a passive-voice narrative: 'Many Africans, ... victims of false promises from unscrupulous compatriots, are embarked, notably in Dakar for Spain or Morocco, to be transited to France.'³⁰

Once in France, immigrants were the victims of 'unscrupulous employers.'³¹ In December 1981, for French communist Minister Anicet Le Pors, 'immigrant workers ... constitute[d] ... a veritable modern slave market.'³² In a flight of poetry in the Senate in April 1983, the French socialist minister of Economy, Finance and Budget, Jacques Delors, cried out: 'What about the freedom ... of the immigrant worker bent over his chain ...!'³³

It followed the narrative that destination states needed to intervene to protect migrants. In June 1973, French Senator Jean-Pierre Blanchet, rapporteur of the social affairs committee, and not part of any political group, offered an extensive account of the slave trade narrative, including necessary policy actions. He donned the clothes of former abolitionists of slavery:

In May 1973, French right-wing Senator Guy Petit declared 'Many Africans, ... victims of false promises from unscrupulous compatriots, are embarked, notably in Dakar for Spain or Morocco, to be transited to France.'

'The problem, of course, is not new. Slave traders have always existed, and there will always be individuals willing to speculate on the misery of others. The exploitation of man by man is as old as the world ... It is the duty of the government to put an end to this degrading industry for the human condition.'³⁴

As he went on, it was 'therefore necessary to grant these immigrants the maximum protection if they suffered harm, by enacting sufficiently severe penalties.'

This narrative has survived until today, with the terms 'smugglers' or 'smuggling' having steadily risen in English books since 1945, according to Google Books Ngram Viewer.

29. *Sud-Ouest*, 30 October 1970, p. 4, 22 May 1971, p. 24.

30. JORF, Séance du 8 mai 1973, pp. 311-2.

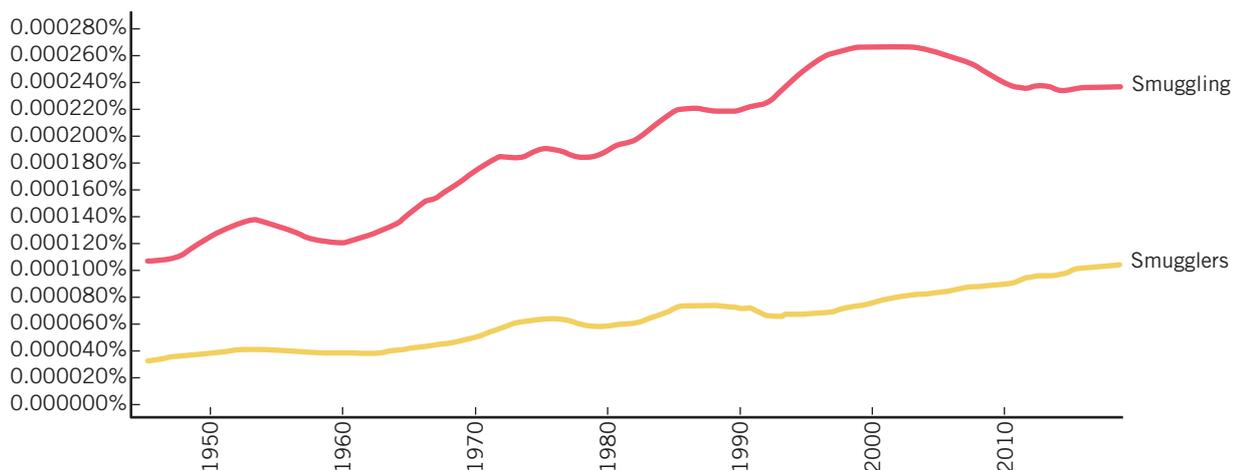
31. JORF, Séance du 27 juin 1973, pp. 993-8.

32. JORF, Séance du 16 décembre 1981, p. 6328.

33. JORF, Séance du 6 avril 1983, p. 65.

34. JORF, Séance du 27 juin 1973, pp. 993-8.

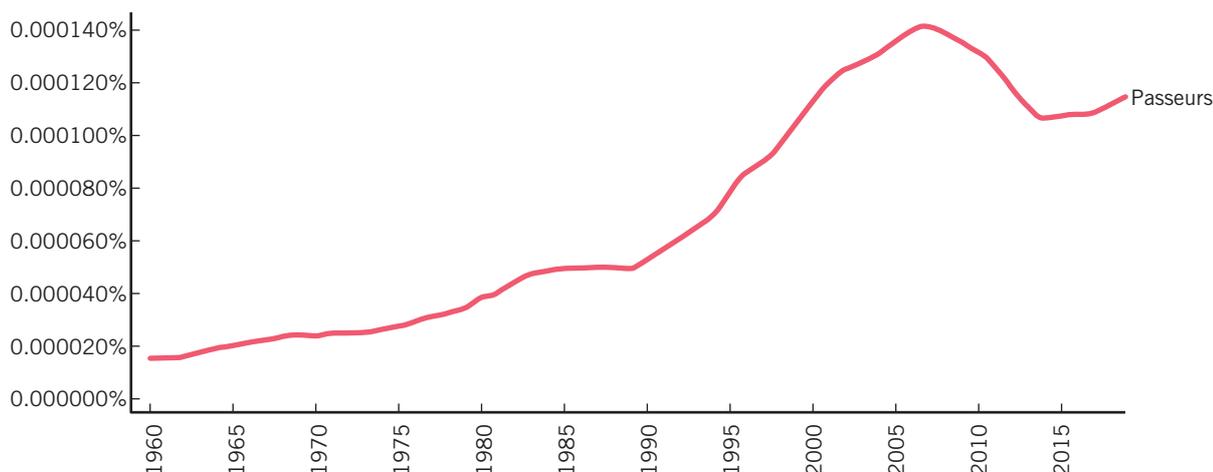
GRAPH 1. 'Smuggling' and 'smugglers' occurrences in english-language books



Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer.

The same trend has taken place in French books since 1960 for the equivalent French term 'passeurs.'

GRAPH 2. 'Passeurs' occurrences in french-language books



Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer.

In May 2015, at the onset of the recent migration crisis, French journalist Guillaume Larrivé still wrote in *Le Figaro*: 'These are not, for the most part, spontaneous movements, but flows organised by traffickers, new slave traders who adapt their criminal activity by creating lucrative circuits' (Larrivé 2015).

b) Exploitation

The second variant of the humanitarian narrative depicted immigrants in Marxist terms as an exploited proletariat.

In terms of wages and working conditions, as early as February 1962, French Christian Democratic Senator André Fosset was concerned about ‘the risk of creating a new under-proletariat, which could arise from the insufficiently organised immigration of these workers.’³⁵ In June 1964, French communist Senator Raymond Bossus related that immigrant workers employed in Citroën factories in Paris were ‘constantly bullied.’³⁶ In April 1968, for the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) – a formerly Christian union close to the socialists – ‘employers, preoccupied with the exclusive search for profit, exploit immigrant workers.’³⁷ In December 1969, French communist Senator Fernand Châtelain declared that ‘immigration policy intends to provide large capitalist corporations with cheap labour to increase their profit and put pressure on the wages of all workers.’³⁸ In March 1980, French socialist Senator Roger Quilliot considered immigrant workers were ‘deceived by the false promises of unscrupulous employers.’ They were then ‘overexploited’ and found themselves in ‘most deplorable living conditions.’³⁹ In January 1981, the French communist candidate for the upcoming presidential election, Georges Marchais, who had previously entered the invasion narrative, then blended the slavery variant with the exploitation variant of the humanitarian narrative. He saw ‘massive immigration ... [as] a consequence of the capitalist regime ... French employers ... resort [to it] in the same way that the slave trade in the past was practised.’⁴⁰

In terms of accommodation, the most frequent expression referred to ‘lamentable and inhumane living conditions,’ repeated on various occasions, particularly by French communist Senator Louis Talamoni.⁴¹

In March 1980, French socialist Senator Roger Quilliot considered immigrant workers were ‘deceived by the false promises of unscrupulous employers.’ They were then ‘overexploited’ and found themselves in ‘most deplorable living conditions.’

Bossus spoke of ‘scandalous conditions’ in which immigrant workers of Citroën factories lived near Paris in the mid-1960s.⁴² In October 1964, Talamoni referred to ‘the inhumane overexploitation ... carried out by certain owners of the land where [the] barracks [of immigrants] are installed.’⁴³ In December 1969, Châtelain depicted immigrant workers as ‘liv[ing] in slums and overcrowded hotels, at the mercy of sleep traffickers.’⁴⁴ For *Sud-Ouest* in April 1971, 80 per cent of ‘black African workers’ in France were ‘subjected to scandalous exploitation’ for housing.⁴⁵ In November 1974, Châtelain described the housing conditions of 39 Turkish and Pakistani immigrant workers on a construction site in western France for the SNCF – the nationalised railway company. ‘They have been parked in an SNCF station for over two months, housed in disused wagons, equipped only with a few wood stoves, without a sink, toilet, shower or running water in the premises.’⁴⁶

The natural reaction was for the state to scrutinise immigrants’ employment and housing conditions. In May 1962, Fosset asked the French minister for Labour ‘what measures the government intend[ed] to take to ... ensure control over [immigrants’] employment.’⁴⁷ In

35. JORF, 9 May 1962.

36. JORF, Séance du 27 juin 1964, p. 888

37. ‘La CFDT et le sort des travailleurs immigrés.’ *Sud-Ouest*, 12 April 1968, p. 8.

38. JORF, Séance du 7 décembre 1969, p. 1444.

39. JORF, Séance du 14 mai 1980, pp. 1952-3.

40. *Sud-Ouest*, 8 January 1981, p. 2.

41. JORF, 11 August 1964, p. 981, Séance du 15 octobre 1964, pp. 1091-2, 1094, Séance du 18 mai 1965, p. 305. See also JORF, Séance du 2 octobre 1970, pp. 1410, 1435-6.

42. JORF, Séance du 27 juin 1964, p. 888.

43. JORF, Séance du 15 octobre 1964, pp. 1091-2, 1094.

44. JORF, Séance du 7 décembre 1969, p. 1444.

45. ‘Ils sont officiellement 40 000 en France.’ *Sud-Ouest*, 1 April 1971, p. 20.

46. JORF, Séance du 20 novembre 1974, pp. 1858-9

47. JORF, 9 May 1962.

May 1965, Talamoni asked the government ‘what measures it intend[ed] to take: first, to provide these workers with decent accommodation following basic hygiene rules; second, against the sleep traffickers who make big profits from this situation.’⁴⁸ For French left-wing Senator Pierre Barbier in November 1969, ‘immigrant labour ... must benefit from much greater protection.’⁴⁹ For the CFDT in June 1970, the ‘lack of ... control ... exposes [immigrant workers] to multiple forms of exploitation’, and the union called for increasing ‘the protection of immigrant workers.’⁵⁰ In October 1970, it mattered for Châtelain to ‘quickly liquidate the slums’ (in French *bidonvilles*).⁵¹ In March 1980, Quilliot requested the government take ‘sanctions ... against employers who take advantage of these workers’ misery and illegal situation to exploit them further.’⁵² Likewise, in April 1983, the ‘Association for the Support of Immigrant Workers’ (in French, ASTI) called for sanctions against those who housed them in squalid conditions, the so-called ‘sleep traffickers.’⁵³

4.2. Content (2): Restricting to protect

Let us now turn to the dark side of the humanitarian narrative: the reactions it triggered and the consequences on immigration. Officially, the humanitarian narrative’s primary goal was not to restrict immigration, like the invasion narrative and the difference narrative assumed. Yet, in practice, it was as much as the others a restriction narrative. As far as ‘smugglers’ were concerned, their criminalisation ipso facto eliminated crucial actors for migration flows to occur. In May 1973, French communist Senator Jacques Duclos made this link explicit when accusing the government that ‘if [immigrants] enter our country illegally, it is because you are not able to take measures to prevent the traffickers from doing their dirty work.’⁵⁴ Likewise, in December 1984, communist Senator Paul Souffrin, from the industrial *département* of Moselle, inextricably linked humanitarian and restrictive stances:

‘The communists have always favoured stopping illegal immigration and firm control of all immigration ... The fight against illegal immigration can succeed only if we take more effective measures against the smugglers and employers of this type of labour.’⁵⁵

Regarding wages, imposing higher wages for immigrant workers often meant rejecting those who could not find employment paid above the threshold the government had defined. From 1969 onwards, the government refused to deliver work permits to immigrants when it considered the proposed wages were too low.⁵⁶ In June 1973, the Gaullist secretary of state to the minister of Labour, Employment and Population, Christian Poncelet, explained the indissociable link between the goals of the humanitarian narrative and the restrictions to immigration:

‘The social policy conducted in favour of foreign workers – a policy to which everyone subscribes – would lose its effectiveness if the number of foreign workers who come to us was to exceed certain limits: public finances are not inexhaustible. Thus, if we want to offer the foreign workers that we welcome decent working and living conditions ..., we must fight anarchic and clandestine immigration. I do not hear any voice against this obligation.’⁵⁷

48. JORF, Séance du 18 mai 1965, p. 305.

49. JORF, Séance du 27 novembre 1969, pp. 946, 950.

50. ‘CFDT: Travailleurs immigrés.’ *Sud-Ouest*, 10 June 1970, p. 10.

51. JORF, Séance du 2 octobre 1970, pp. 1410, 1435-6.

52. JORF, Séance du 14 mai 1980, pp. 1952-3.

53. *Sud-Ouest*, 14 April 1983, p. 8.

54. JORF, Séance du 3 mai 1973, pp. 261, 264.

55. JORF, Séance du 17 décembre 1984, p. 4660.

56. JORF, 15 March 1970.

57. JORF, Séance du 27 juin 1973, pp. 993-8.

When the government forced specific companies employing immigrant workers to increase wages, they sometimes had to cut jobs. In 1974, after the Labour Inspection forced the company mentioned above, employing Turkish and Pakistani immigrant workers on a construction site in western France for the SNCF, to increase wages, 'the company ceased its activity on the site.'⁵⁸ Once immigrants had lost their jobs, they were liable to be deported. In May 1984, left-wing Senator Edouard Bonnefous warned that offering vocational training to immigrant workers to find better-paid jobs would cost too much because many could not even speak French. As left-wing Senator Max Lejeune summed up: 'The impossibility of retraining because of the poor command of our language by these foreign workers leads ... to assisting in voluntary departures.'⁵⁹ In those conditions, as centre-right Senator Jean Colin put it, even letting in the country immigrants who could not find a job 'constitute[d] a danger.'⁶⁰

In October 1979, communist Senator Anicet Le Pors also used the humanitarian goal of protecting immigrants to end up justifying restrictions to immigration: 'It is now necessary really to stop any new immigration of workers, in the interest of immigrant workers in France, in the interest of immigrant workers who are likely to come and, of course, in the interest of French workers.'⁶¹ In contrast to the difference narrative, the humanitarian narrative put forward that restrictions were in the interest of immigrant workers. By preventing them from coming and occupying jobs, government restrictions protected them. In August 1983, CGT Executive Board member Joannès Galland summed up: 'We have long advocated a policy of stopping immigration in the very interests of French and immigrant workers.'⁶²

'It is now necessary really to stop any new immigration of workers, in the interest of immigrant workers in France, in the interest of immigrant workers who are likely to come and, of course, in the interest of French workers.'

Regarding housing, the government would not subsidise the accommodation of all potential immigrant workers. Subsidies led the government to reduce entries to control costs. As communist Senator Louis Talamoni put it as early as June 1966, the government should not use existing housing budgets for the housing of immigrant workers: 'Under no circumstances can the rehousing of ... emigrant workers occur to the detriment of the poorly housed French.'⁶³ In response to a question in the Senate, the Gaullist government made clear in October 1970 that 'a comprehensive policy of controlled immigration [was] essential to ensure the effectiveness of the measures taken to reduce slums and unsanitary housing.'⁶⁴

Leading policy actors recognised how the humanitarian narrative could help restrict immigration dramatically. Left-wing Senator Edouard Bonnefous, who had contributed to the invasion narrative, came to consider how promising the humanitarian narrative could be. In December 1974, he argued that if employers 'remunerate[d] all activities at their real economic value for the community', there would be no need for immigrant workers.⁶⁵ Even more explicitly, in December 1977, the socialist vice-president of the Senate, André Méric, argued that 'a very substantial increase in wages' was the condition for 'the substitution of French workers for immigrant workers.'⁶⁶ In December 1978, centre-right Secretary of State for the Status of

58. JORF, Séance du 20 novembre 1974, pp. 1858-9.

59. JORF, Séance du 2 mai 1984, pp. 534-5.

60. JORF, Séance du 5 décembre 1984, p. 4092

61. JORF, Séance du 18 octobre 1979, p. 3357.

62. 'Après l'interview de Marchelli à *Sud-Ouest* le débat sur les immigrés prend de l'ampleur.' *Sud-Ouest*, 19 August 1983, pp. 1-2.

63. JORF, Séance du 22 juin 1966, p. 908.

64. JORF, Séance du 2 octobre 1970, p. 1436.

65. JORF, Séance du 1^{er} décembre 1974, p. 2754.

66. JORF, Séance du 5 décembre 1977, p. 3487.

Manual and Immigrant Workers Lionel Stoléru argued that by ‘chang[ing] working conditions ... we can achieve a normal substitution of French workers for immigrant workers.’⁶⁷

The claims of the humanitarian narrative to protect immigrants should not be mistaken for reflecting some sort of morals of policymakers. As this analysis has shown, policymakers were well aware of the indissociable link between these claims and their restrictionist agenda. As the declarations of, for instance, Edouard Bonnefous show, they merely used their humanitarian claims to achieve restrictions.

To sum up the actantial model of this narrative, the good actors were the native population, organised by the state, with extensive humanitarian values. Immigrants occupied the role of voiceless and dehumanised victims. The villains were all those making migration possible – smugglers, employers, and landlords who provided migrants with transportation, employment, and housing. The hero was the state, chasing the villains and restoring justice. Interestingly, immigration restriction did not appear in this narrative structure as a remedy but as an outcome. Historical documents reveal, however, this outcome was the major preoccupation of the proponents of the narrative.

4.3. Producers and diffusion

Now that we have reviewed the content of the narrative, let us turn to identify its producers. Among French parliamentarians, Louis Talamoni was a vocal proponent of the Marxist variant. A communist senator of Paris south-eastern suburbs, Talamoni was also a native of Corsica, to which he kept close links, which he regularly defended in the Senate, and where he finally died in 1975.⁶⁸ It is likely that his denunciation of the exploitation of foreign immigrant workers also aimed to defend opportunities for workers from Corsica, an integral part of France but less developed.

More broadly, the humanitarian narrative appears to have emerged through representatives of French workers, denouncing the pay levels and working conditions of immigrant workers. Both the Communist Party and trade unions were producers of the humanitarian narrative. They maintained they reported claims of immigrant workers even though evidence suggests their claims differed from immigrants’. In Renault factories in April 1973, the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and the CFDT strove to shape immigrants’ claims and distributed leaflets referring to low-paid immigrant workers.⁶⁹ In May 1973, the president of the communist group in the Senate, Jacques Duclos, declared ‘four immigrant workers [had gone] on hunger strike in Montreuil [in the east of Paris] ... to protest against the working conditions which are imposed on immigrant workers (refusal to conclude employment contracts, arbitrary dismissals, reduced wages).’ However, as the secretary of state to the minister of Labour, Employment and Population, Christian Poncelet, clarified following Duclos’ comment, those immigrants were primarily trying to get a work permit. They had not complied when entering the country, with the recent regulation of 1972 aiming to restrict immigration.⁷⁰ Their action did not seek to increase their wages or improve their working conditions in contrast to Duclos’ comments.

Even though in France trade unions and the Communist Party were the primary producers of the humanitarian narrative, especially its exploitation variant, it is again a striking finding of this inquiry that, as we could see, there were proponents of the humanitarian narrative on all sides of the political spectrum. Neither the communists nor even the left had the monopoly of even the Marxist variant. Right-wing ministers routinely took up the humanitarian narrative. In terms of countries, however, France was the centre of this narrative, which was less salient in British debates during that period.

67. JORF, Séance du 4 décembre 1978, p. 4151.

68. Sénat, Notice biographique de Louis Talamoni, http://www.senat.fr/senateur/talamoni_louis000302.html.

69. ‘Renault auto works in France are half paralyzed on Apr. 18 by intensified work stoppages.’ *New York Times*, 19 April 1973.

70. JORF, Séance du 3 mai 1973, pp. 261, 264.

4.4. Impact

The humanitarian narrative overcame the shortcomings of the invasion narrative and the difference narrative. It did not encourage violence against immigrants like the former. It was not likely to generate tensions within destination countries, which were already diverse in terms of race and culture. Whereas the proponents of both the invasion narrative and the difference narrative faced accusations of fostering racism, insensitivity to the situation of immigrants, or division among citizens, the humanitarian veil of the humanitarian narrative explains why few challenged it. It is the author's opinion that those reasons contributed to making the humanitarian narrative dominant when passing restrictive migration legislation.

The humanitarian narrative quickly gained traction in the press as government officials packaged their efforts to restrict immigration with the humanitarian mask of protecting immigrants. After the Marcellin-Fontanet circulars of January and February 1972 had entered into force to restrict immigration, the government summed up their objectives: to 'harmoniously integrate immigration policy into the employment policy framework; to increase social protection for foreign workers.' In April 1973, *Sud-Ouest* uncritically reported this narrative, only regretting the new framework still did not apply to Algerians and the nationals of former French colonies in Africa, 'to the detriment of whom the "sleep traffickers" and other brown employers thus have every opportunity to carry out their culpable activities' (Dumora 1973).

The humanitarian narrative quickly gained traction in the press as government officials packaged their efforts to restrict immigration with the humanitarian mask of protecting immigrants.

In September 1973, Gaullist Minister for Labour and Population Georges Gorse referred to 'the interests of ... immigrants themselves' and presented as follows the government's immigration policy: 'strictly controlling the entry of foreign workers, ensuring that they have decent material and moral conditions of life, these two objectives being strictly linked.'⁷¹ In October 1974, a *Sud-Ouest* headline quoted government declarations: 'The entry of foreign workers remains suspended "to preserve the future and prepare for their future reception"' (Chatenay 1974). Likewise, in January 1976, *Sud-Ouest* headlined: 'Increased protection of immigrant workers and fight against human smugglers.' The article referred to new draft legislation stepping up the crackdown on 'sleep traffickers.'⁷²

In April that year, another piece had for title: 'Adopted: Two texts aimed at "moralising" the employment and housing of immigrants.' The piece discussed how the government 'stepped up repression' and 'pursued stopping immigration at the source through negotiations with labour-exporting countries.'⁷³

The government and parliament translated the narrative into actual legislation. Under the guise of protecting immigrants, legislative measures aimed at restricting immigration and protect national workers. By 1972, the government had made clear they would not accept immigrant workers if their employer had not beforehand submitted to the national agency for employment an application, including the salary and housing conditions of the worker (Dumora 1973). The government strengthened border controls and passed two laws against 'human traffickers and sleep traffickers.'⁷⁴

71. 'Nouvelles mesures sociales annoncées en faveur des travailleurs immigrés, mais après le 31 octobre, la réglementation contre les clandestins sera appliquée avec rigueur.' *Sud-Ouest*, 25 September 1973, p. 2.

72. *Sud-Ouest*, 16 January 1976, p. 20.

73. *Sud-Ouest*, 30 April 1976, p. 2.

74. *Sud-Ouest*, 25 September 1973, p. 2.

As early as June 1973, the Gaullist secretary of state to the minister of Labour, Employment and Population, Christian Poncelet, welcomed the effects with the

‘drop of around 45 per cent in two years in the number of foreign workers entering France. It fell from 195,000 in 1970 to 117,000 in 1972, and this drop is even more remarkable as it took place during a period during which our country experienced very strong economic conditions.’

He went on to justify further curbs on immigration to achieve the ‘social policy ... in favour of foreign workers.’ They included strengthening border controls and reaching out to North and Sub-Saharan African countries of emigration ‘so that they exercise strict control over people who wish to come and work’ in France. They also included ‘prohibit[ing] temporary employment companies from hiring Algerian or African workers looking for a first job, because of the precariousness of the employment offered by these companies.’⁷⁵

In October 1974, the government decided to abolish the last leftovers of the freedom of movement between France and its former African colonies, inherited from the late colonial period, and subject them to residence and work permits from 1 January 1975. In the Senate, the government presented the step as a way ‘to provide increased social protection to the nationals of these countries.’⁷⁶ Besides overcoming the shortcomings of other narratives on domestic stability, the humanitarian narrative may also have been useful to keep good relations with former colonies for both France and the UK and even in enticing them in the control of migration flows. However, we did not find evidence that this aspect was a major preoccupation of destination states. The dominant orientation seems to have been not to compromise on restrictive migration objectives for the sake of good relations with former colonies. As far as the latter were concerned, we did not find evidence either they had a serious agency to influence the migration policies of their former metropolises. The humanitarian narrative to justify restrictive legislation was more addressed to the national population than to former colonies.

In August 1983, socialist Secretary of State for Family, Population, and Immigrant Workers Georgina Dufoix considered that ‘since July 1982 the government has held a “reinforced regulatory arsenal against the trafficking of labour”’ targeting, in this order, ‘fraudulent employers, smugglers and other human traffickers, and [finally] clandestine immigrants.’⁷⁷

The humanitarian narrative has been widespread until today. A recent article by migration scholar Ahmet İçduygu described it as emphasising ‘the brutality of the criminal smuggling networks’ and ‘the vulnerability of unfortunate migrants.’ The article also connected recent UN efforts ‘to combat migrant smuggling’ to this narrative (İçduygu 2021, 4; see also Garelli and Tazzioli 2018).

75. JORF, Séance du 27 juin 1973, pp. 993-8.

76. JORF, 7 August 1975, p. 2507.

77. ‘Travailleurs immigrés: Bientôt des mesures contre les clandestins.’ *Sud-Ouest*, 3 August 1983, p. 2.

5. The oil-shock narrative and the crisis narrative

Two other narratives appeared later and were of marginal importance when France and the UK turned to structural restrictions against immigrants from the Global South. Yet, they have since then played some role to justify the turn retrospectively, albeit anachronistically. What was common in those two narratives was the idea that, even though destination countries regarded immigrants sympathetically, they just could not welcome them for material reasons independent of their will. However, those two narratives differed as they assigned different roles to immigrants. In the oil-shock narrative, immigrants had some responsibility for the economic problems that made their integration impossible, in the crisis narrative they had no responsibility.

5.1. The oil-shock narrative

a) Content

In the oil-shock narrative, the increase in oil prices by oil-producing countries resulted in an economic slowdown in developed countries, *forcing* the latter to reduce immigration. In a holistic frame considering countries as units, it was fair to push back the emigrants of countries responsible for the increase in oil prices. Oil-producing countries were the countries of origin of immigrants, such as Algeria, or were Muslim countries, like most immigrants from outside Europe were. Policies in the regions of origin of immigrants *forced* destination countries to restrict immigration. A feature of this narrative was that its proponents suggested it rather than articulated it. It was never a narrative as explicit as the previously mentioned narratives. Also, in our documents, it emerged much after the oil crisis of October 1973.

In our documents from the French Senate, the first occurrence was in November 1977, over four years later. According to centre-right Secretary of State for the Status of Manual and Immigrant Workers Lionel Stoléru,

‘The years that have just passed since 1973 and the oil crisis have been years of almost zero growth in France and most foreign countries. Around us, in Europe, following the international crisis, many countries have carried out massive dismissals of immigrant workers...’⁷⁸

The second occurrence came two years later, in October 1979, after the second oil crisis had started. This occurrence was a critical expression of the narrative, showing that a full articulation of the narrative was critical. According to French communist Senator Anicet Le Pors,

‘Today, the government is leading a head-on attack against OPEC [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries] countries and against immigrants because you want to accredit, in public opinion, the idea that Arabs and immigrants – the Arabs from outside and from inside – are causing our difficulties in France. Perhaps you will succeed in deceiving a part of public opinion. In any case, don’t count on us to let you go in this direction.’⁷⁹

Le Pors was, nevertheless, a staunch advocate of restricting immigration. Stoléru kept alluding to this narrative to suggest the necessity of enforcing migration restrictions. In December 1980, he

78. JORF, Séance du 8 novembre 1977, p. 2612

79. JORF, Séance du 18 octobre 1979, p. 3356.

claimed, 'Immigration policy could no longer be what it was before 1973. It was ... necessary to reverse migration flows.'⁸⁰ Further increases in oil prices in 1979 and 1980 gave the centre-right government more confidence to assert, in January 1981:

'Given ... the economic difficulties caused by repeated increases in oil costs, French companies, despite their efforts, can only create few additional jobs. Therefore ... the government decided several years ago to stop immigration altogether.'⁸¹

This statement summed up that the origin of the problem was in oil-producing countries and that destination countries did their best but just could not create more jobs for immigrants. The statement, which referred to 'several years ago', was also clear it was an *ex post facto* justification.

To sum up the actantial model of this narrative, the bad actors were oil-producing countries considered as a whole. France was the good actor and the victim. There was no hero, but the state was the legitimate actor, partly resolving the problem the bad actors had created, by restricting immigration.

b) Producers and diffusion

This narrative was a production of the centre-right government in the very late 1970s and early 1980s. In contrast to previous narratives, it does not seem to have received support from the left. Beyond France, Anglo-American newspapers also diffused this narrative. In July 1983, *The Washington Post* explained the massive layoffs of immigrants from North Africa in the French automobile industry due to 'the failure to adapt quickly enough to the oil price shocks of the 1970s.' The article, however, also put forward German and Japanese car manufacturers had no such problems, even though they depended even more than France on Middle Eastern oil (Dobbs 1983).

c) Impact

The policy impact of this narrative was small insofar as, by the time policymakers alluded to it, the turn to structural restrictions against immigrants from the Global South had already occurred. Different narratives dominated when France and the UK turned to restrictions. The impact of the oil-shock narrative was greater to justify restrictions retrospectively. Yet, even then, its presentation had to remain implicit. It is the author's opinion that the reason this narrative had to remain implicit is that it encouraged international conflicts between oil-producing and oil-consuming countries and, consequently, conflicts between natives and Arab immigrants in destination countries. Like the invasion or difference narratives, therefore, it could threaten public order in destination countries. The main impact of this narrative was probably, like for the invasion and difference narratives, to foster the development of a refined narrative that removed the element of guilt from immigrants to reduce the risk of violence in destination countries.

5.2. The crisis narrative

a) Content

The crisis narrative was close to the oil-shock narrative. Yet, it gave immigrants a different role and received the support of different policymakers. For this reason, it has to be considered as a different narrative. This narrative changed the role of immigrants insofar as it removed the responsibility of Arab

80. JORF, Séance du 8 décembre 1980, p. 6068.

81. JORF, 8 January 1981, pp. 48-9.

or Muslim countries, and therefore of immigrants, for the economic problems of destination countries. The latter had to stop immigration because of insurmountable economic difficulties, whatever their origin might be. The word ‘crisis’ here has the meaning it had in the 1970s of ‘widespread domestic difficulties, mostly economic.’ The core of the crisis narrative put forward existing unemployment in the destination country to restrict immigration, as early as the early 1970s and before the first oil crisis (Dumora 1973). In February 1977, French left-wing Senator Henri Caillavet observed that ‘unemployment is a terrible evil’ and asked how the government could substitute French workers for immigrant workers from North Africa and Turkey.⁸² In April 1979, British conservative leader Margaret Thatcher referred to existing ‘unemployment problems’ among West Indians to consider that ‘taking more and more [immigrants] ... would be the very worst thing we could do’ (Downie 1979). In October 1979, French left-wing Senator Max Lejeune referred to ‘unemployment’ to account for ‘a surge in xenophobia ... from French workers towards foreign workers.’⁸³ This account did not assume that foreign workers were responsible for unemployment, but only that the existence of unemployment implied immigration could not continue.

From the structural point of view, the actantial model of this narrative shared similarities with that of the difference narrative. The roles of good and bad actors were blurred. Immigration threatened to lead to more economic problems, as destination countries did not enjoy the economic conditions for immigration. Again, the hero was the state, bringing remedy by restricting immigration.

b) Producers and diffusion

In contrast to the oil-shock narrative, which was only a production of the government in France, the crisis narrative emerged from various sides of the political spectrum and in both France and the UK. It is, again, a finding of this study that policymakers with otherwise widely different ideologies could embrace that same narrative to restrict immigration. Like other narratives, the crisis narrative originated in local workers’ concerns over further immigration and state officials articulated it. The objective to secure the votes of this powerful constituency explains why so different policymakers could enter that narrative.

c) Impact

The narrative justified immigration restriction legislation and return programmes. The government routinely enforced regulations to deny work permits to immigrants if native unemployed workers were available (Dumora 1973). Likewise, in 1977, the French government targeted unemployed foreigners, offering them a bonus of 10,000 francs if they returned to their countries (Lebon 1979, 37). The narrative underlying these measures was that unemployment problems justified immigration restrictions and return programmes. Even though the narrative justified the last bits in the turn to restrictions, it was, like the oil-shock narrative, instrumental in justifying restrictions retrospectively and keeping them later.

However, there were widespread suspicions on the underlying logic of this narrative. Newspapers and policymakers routinely condemned presenting the numbers of immigrants and unemployed side by side – a presentation that could also usher in violence. They criticised the potential universal explanation ‘the crisis’ offered. According to journalist Frank Capdeville in December 1977, ‘we now say “the crisis” to justify everything.’ As far as economic problems were concerned, he considered they were instead ‘the culmination of a notorious lack of foresight.’ He referred to ‘unions, whose intransigence and the spiral in escalation have too often masked the long-term interest of those they claimed to defend’ (Capdeville 1977). Open contestations of the narrative implied we should not overestimate its impact.

82. JORF, 8 January 1981, pp. 48-9.

83. JORF, Séance du 18 octobre 1979, p. 3340.

In the 2020-2021 pandemic, the crisis narrative found another favourable context. Sanitary risks *forced* destination countries to restrict immigration and European countries used this opportunity to exert greater coercion towards immigrants from outside Europe (Comte 2021).

6. Pattern

This review of narratives, their rise, and, sometimes, discredit allows suggesting factors of success.

The five narratives shared commonalities. First, all of them were addressed to the native population primarily, rather than immigrants or origin countries. Even the humanitarian narrative aimed to defuse criticism in the national population and to call out national workers. Second, all narratives aroused a sense of urgency and righteousness: resisting an invasion, preventing social segmentation, helping victims, applying international retributive justice, or managing social and economic affairs. Third, the five narratives shared similar actantial models, with only slight variations. A common feature was the role of the state as a hero, bringing back stability or justice to a situation migration had disturbed. The remedy was in most cases to stop migration. The good actors consisted of the native population. The bad actors could be immigrants, those helping them, or the countries to which they belonged.

Beyond their commonalities, the five narratives had serious differences, which may help to find out why some narratives were more successful than others. Our assessment of narratives in the previous sections according to the lack of contestations of their logic and their occurrence to justify legislation has shown that the most successful narrative was the humanitarian narrative, later backed by the crisis narrative to keep existing restrictions. We will therefore mostly focus on those two to find out the factors of success.

All narratives aroused a sense of urgency and righteousness: resisting an invasion, preventing social segmentation, helping victims, applying international retributive justice, or managing social and economic affairs.

The ability to restrict information and frame the analysis from an exclusive angle was vital for success. The proponents of the humanitarian narrative had to suppress migrants' voices or distort their claims, sometimes cooperating with immigrants already settled. Inconsistency and inadequacy did not matter as long as the exclusive frame kept them out of the debate. The references to slavery or exploitation in the humanitarian narrative worked only with the standards of destination countries. Few of the proponents and followers of this narrative paid attention to the fact that immigrants' wages, albeit low from their standards, represented a significant multiple, sometimes above 10, of wage options in origin countries. The exploitation variant located immigrants in big companies. However, a large share worked in small- and medium-sized companies, where their wages were lower and where their employers were often immigrants themselves (Germain 2016, 60). As there were few local workers in those companies, few pointed at this issue.

Recent studies have highlighted a similar pattern: inadequacy and inconsistency do not appear if the information is restricted or if the frame of observation remains narrow. Giovanna Campani has underscored that the narrative on immigrants' criminality in Italy over the past decade has systematically dissociated this criminality from Italy's long-established organised crime system (King and Wood 2013, 14-15). Likewise, Ahmet İçduygu's ethnography of smugglers in Turkey has shown how much the humanitarian narrative's representation is inadequate. Migrants do not consider smugglers as criminals but as allies. Smugglers do not regard themselves as outlaws but as professionals helping migrants. İçduygu points out that the role of smugglers in the humanitarian narrative rests on a frame different from the one used during the Cold War, when 'persons who helped migrants escape across international borders were understood to be *humanitarian actors*, not *criminals*' (İçduygu 2021, 1, 9-11).

Then the question becomes: how to explain that some narratives, however inadequate or inconsistent they may be, managed to restrict information, focus public debates on their exclusive frame of analysis, and avoid contestations? Only for the humanitarian narrative, our sources did not highlight contestations either through additional information or a different angle of analysis. It is the author's opinion that the fundamental reason was that narrative echoed the interests of powerful segments in society or institutions. It is possible to trace the origins of all five narratives to destination countries' workers' concerns over immigration. But the narratives that were the most successful – the humanitarian and crisis narratives – directly connected to those concerns by putting forward the risk of workers' exploitation or unemployment. The humanitarian narrative claimed to be based on morals, but it required little effort to debunk the inconsistency and inadequacy of such morals so that it is the author's opinion that the narrative owed its strength primarily to its adequacy with powerful organised interests, not with consistent morals. In addition, state officials, including ministries of the Interior, shared the aim of state intervention to restrict immigration out of sovereignty or security concerns, as the invasion narrative suggested. State representatives played a role in developing all narratives. This explanation of narrative success through the power of their supporters is compatible with the fact that all narratives were addressed to the national population primarily. Immigrants were still few, poor, and disorganised, so that they were marginal players narratives did not seriously bother to target primarily. Origin countries either did not have any influence over migration policies in their former metropolises – even considering the willingness of France and the UK to keep good relations with their former colonies to access raw materials and export markets.

Besides the adequacy with powerful organised interests, this review also suggests that the impact of a narrative on law and order mattered to its success. The documents we have reviewed suggest that whether a narrative could usher in outbreaks of uncontrolled violence or undermine the cohesion of destination countries is the most plausible explanation for why policymakers in charge of ensuring law and order turned away from a narrative or even tried to suppress it. It is the author's opinion this is the most plausible explanation for why the invasion narrative, the difference narrative, and, to some extent, a fully articulated expression of the oil-shock narrative failed.

When a narrative generated support among powerful actors and was not likely to usher in widespread violence, there were few contestations of its exclusive focus, however simplistic or inconsistent it was. Again, inconsistency did not affect the humanitarian narrative. The same proponents of that narrative who denounced the low wages paid to immigrant workers also deplored the sizeable sums of money the governments of origin countries received through migrants' remittances and the high rents immigrants had to pay to 'sleep traffickers.'⁸⁴ If wages were so low, these other problems should not have appeared. Actually, after the government forced immigrants to move to better accommodation, most refused to pay the higher rents the government required. Several rent strikes started in government-sponsored housings.⁸⁵ Inconsistency did not damage the oil-shock narrative and the crisis narrative either. Both emerged way after the turns they were trying to justify. The increase in real oil prices and unemployment also occurred after immigration restrictions had started.

84. JORF, Séance du 22 juin 1966, p. 908.

85. JORF, Séance du 2 octobre 1970, pp. 1410, 1435-6, Séance du 4 décembre 1978, p. 4151, 18 January 1979, p. 176.

7. Conclusion and propections

The focus on narratives to justify immigration restrictions in France and the UK between the 1960s and the mid-1980s shows how widespread they were in those two countries. Even though the invasion narrative and the difference narrative emerged in both countries equally, the humanitarian narrative was a French production. The oil-shock narrative and the crisis narrative too were less widespread in the UK. The humanitarian narrative expanded beyond France and has been common until today. A reason France was more advanced had to do with the greater urge to restrict immigration. The legacy of the colonial period and the geographical proximity of countries of strong emigration in the Global South meant the migration pressure from outside Europe was stronger in France in the 1960s. The UK was an offshore country with more effective border controls, and it abolished the relatively liberal regulations for the immigration of Commonwealth nationals even before France. The debate on immigration from outside Europe in the UK, even though significant, did not take the dramatic proportions it gained in France in the 1960s and 1970s.

Based on this review, can we make some propections on how migration narratives could evolve in the 2020s? If narratives are what this work has argued – simple stories that need to match the interests of powerful actors and propose efficient pathways to their desired outcome – transforming policy narratives is no simple task. Let us imagine one would attempt to develop a policy narrative that would encourage general openness instead of restrictions. There are, admittedly, plenty of ways to forge such a narrative with several arguments. An openness narrative could put forward the aim of integrating immigrants into the economic life at their own pace. It could include this aim in a sort of ‘global turn’, emphasising the importance of reducing income gaps through migration at the global level, like a rising trend in moral philosophy has been proposing lately (D’Amato and Lucarelli 2019, 5-6). The narrative would suggest that migration reduces income inequalities between countries and remittances foster development in origin countries (Germano 2018). But, for this narrative to work, it would be necessary that immigration do not affect or just be not likely to affect the interests of key actors. With significant income disparities across countries, it is unlikely that natives in destination countries will be receptive to such a global turn. States, which are territorial and not global organisations, are not likely either. If immigrants come in large numbers and there is violence for whatever reason, it will be hard to hold the narrative. One could expect constant contestations of the narrative’s frame and constant references to negative disturbances related to immigration. They include the low wages and poor housing conditions of immigrants according to the standards in destination countries so that the humanitarian narrative would probably re-emerge powerfully. An openness narrative would need to find first powerful organised interests likely to support openness.

Bibliography

- Basnett, David. 1984. "Wages and Jobs: It's No Heresy to Talk to the Unions." *Financial Times*, 8 August, 11.
- Bombédiac, Christian. 1971a. "Le drame des clandestins africains." *Sud-Ouest*, 1 April, 20.
- Bombédiac, Christian. 1971b. "À Irun, une colonie africaine vit de la charité publique." *Sud-Ouest*, 20 April, 18.
- Braddock, Kurt, and James Price Dillard. 2016. "Meta-Analytic Evidence for the Persuasive Effect of Narratives on Beliefs, Attitudes, Intentions, and Behaviors." *Communication Monographs* 83 (4): 446–467.
- Boswell, Christina, Andrew Geddes, and Peter Scholten. 2011. "The Role of Narratives in Migration Policy-making: A Research Framework." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13 (1): 1–11.
- Boswell, Christina, Saskia Smellie, Marcello Maneri, Andrea Pogliano, Blanca Garcés, Verónica Benet-Martínez, and Berta Güell. 2021. "The Emergence, Uses and Impacts of Narratives on Migration: State of the Art." *BRIDGES Working Papers* 2. (forthcoming).
- Capdeville, Frank. 1977. "La société malade de l'emploi." *Sud-Ouest*, 13 December, 4.
- Chatenay, René. 1974. "L'entrée des travailleurs étrangers reste suspendue « pour préserver l'avenir et préparer leur accueil futur »." *Sud-Ouest*, 10 October, 2.
- Chin, Rita. 2017. *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Comte, Emmanuel. 2020. Review of *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History*, by Rita Chin. *Journal of Contemporary History* 55 (1): 218–219.
- Comte, Emmanuel. 2021. "Consolidating the European Asylum Regime's Coercive Trajectory until the Pandemic." *Afers internacionals* 129.
- Compte rendu intégral des séances du Sénat (accessed in 2021). <http://www.senat.fr/seances/comptes-rendus.html>.
- D'Amato, Silvia, and Sonia Lucarelli. 2019. "Talking Migration: Narratives of Migration and Justice Claims in the European Migration System of Governance." *The International Spectator* 54 (3): 1–17.
- Delerm, Robert. 1967. *Cent millions de Français*. Paris: Éditions universitaires.
- Dobbs, Michael. 1983. "Auto Strike Is Reminder to Mitterrand That Austerity Plan Still Awaits Tests; Protest of Planned Peugeot Layoffs May Be Preview of Autumn Unrest." *The Washington Post*, 24 July.
- Downie, Leonard. 1979. "'Iron Lady's' Tough Politics; Thatcher, Tories' 'Iron Lady', Runs a Tough Campaign; Thatcher Seeks to Lead Britain to Right." *The Washington Post*, 22 April.
- Dumora, Albert. 1973. "De l'immigration sauvage à l'immigration organisée." *Sud-Ouest*, 8 April, 6.
- Escalas, Jennifer Edson. 2007. "Self-Referencing and Persuasion: Narrative Transportation versus Analytical Elaboration." *Journal of Consumer Research* 33 (4): 421–429.
- Europresse Database (accessed in 2021). <http://www.europresse.com/en/>.
- Factiva Database (accessed in 2021). <https://www.dowjones.com/professional/factiva/>.
- Garelli, Glenda, and Martina Tazzioli. 2018. "The Humanitarian War Against Migrant Smugglers at Sea." *Antipode* 50 (3): 685–703.
- Germain, Félix F. 2016. *Decolonizing the Republic: African and Caribbean Migrants in Postwar Paris, 1946–1974*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
- Germano, Roy. 2018. *Outsourcing Welfare: How the Money Immigrants Send Home Contributes to Stability in Developing Countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goodhart, David. 2004. "Too Diverse?" *Prospect*, 20 February. www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/too-diverse-david-goodhart-multiculturalism-britain-immigration-globalisation.
- Green, Melanie C., and Timothy C. Brock. 2000. "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79 (5): 701–721.

- Güell, Berta, and Sònia Parella. 2021. "Guidelines on How to Include the Gender Perspective in the Analysis of Migration Narratives." *BRIDGES series*. <https://www.bridges-migration.eu/publications/guidelines-on-how-to-include-the-gender-perspective-in-the-analysis-of-migration-narratives>.
- Hansard online database (accessed in 2021). <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>.
- Heffer, Simon. 1999. *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell*. London: Orion.
- İçduygu, Ahmet. 2021. "Decentering Migrant Smuggling: Reflections on the Eastern Mediterranean Route to Europe." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47 (14): 3293–3309.
- Jones, Michael D, and Mark K McBeth. 2010. "A Narrative Policy Framework: Clear Enough to Be Wrong?" *Policy Studies Journal* 38 (2): 329–353.
- King, Russell, and Nancy Wood. 2013. *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*. London: Routledge.
- Koven, Ronald. 1981. "French Communists Appeal to Racist Feelings in Bid to Win Votes." *The Washington Post*, 10 February.
- Larrivé, Guillaume. 2015. "Immigration: le naufrage de la volonté." *Le Figaro*, 12 May.
- Lebon, André. 1979. "L'aide au retour des travailleurs étrangers." *Économie et statistique* 113 (July-August).
- Locardel, Pierre. 1970. "Le VI^e Plan et l'immigration." *Sud-Ouest*, 5 April, 6.
- Marsh, David. 1982. "European News: Immigration Clampdown by France." *Financial Times*, 4 November, 3.
- McLean, Iain. 2001. *Rational Choice and British Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nossiter, Bernard D. 1978a. "Britain's Tories Are Emphasising Issue of Race; Britain's Tories Raise Race Issue." *The Washington Post*, 6 February.
- Nossiter, Bernard D. 1978b. "Race Issue Introduced by Tories Unsettles British Voters." *The Washington Post*, 2 March.
- Powell, Enoch. 1968. "'Rivers of Blood' Speech at the Conservative Association Meeting in Birmingham on 20 April 1968." Reproduced in: "Anthropology 1001: An Intro to Anthropology Course at Baruch College." Accessed 21 October 2021. https://anth1001.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/enoch-powell_speech.pdf.

BRIDGES

Assessing the production and impact of migration narratives

BRIDGES: Assessing the production and impact of migration narratives is a project funded by the EU H2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and implemented by a consortium of 12 institutions from all over Europe. The project aims to understand the causes and consequences of migration narratives in a context of increasing politicisation and polarisation around these issues by focusing on six European countries: France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. To do so, BRIDGES adopts an interdisciplinary and co-productive approach and is implemented by a diverse consortium formed by universities, think tanks and research centres, cultural associations, and civil society organisations.

The BRIDGES Working Papers are a series of academic publications presenting the research results of the project in a structured and rigorous way. They can either focus on particular case studies covered by the project or adopt a comparative perspective.

How to cite this Working Paper:

Comte, Emmanuel. 2021. "Historical analysis on the evolution of migration and integration narratives: British-French narratives to restrict immigration from the Global South, 1960s-mid-1980s." *BRIDGES Working Papers* 1.

© BRIDGES Consortium 2021

The texts are published in digital format in open access and under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license.

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.5704751](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5704751)

ISSN: 2696-8886

Editorial Coordination: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB)

This publication has been funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 101004564. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union. The European Commission and the Research Executive Agency are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.