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Unveiling Disregarded Racism in British Immigration Practices between 1945 and 1965: A Focus on the Others and the Colonies

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Abstract

This study, firstly, aims to reveal racist perspectives towards immigrants, particularly from the colonies to the United Kingdom, and racism among policymakers within a 20-year time frame following 1945, and, secondly, seeks to provide an overview of how issues stemming from the controversy on racism were perceived in the UK from the end of the 2nd World War to the mid-60s. The study also attempts to link the consequences of the shrinkage of the British Empire with the emergence of racial perspectives on immigration in the UK during that period. Following the end of the 2nd World War, British immigration policies underwent significant changes, from the laissez-faire approaches of the central government (Rattansi, 1995, p. 24) in the late 40s to the most restrictive laws and regulations of Europe (Joppke, 1999, pp. 100-102) in the 60s and 70s, two contrasting approaches to immigration. One of the key factors shaping a pretty flexible immigration policy in the early period of this study was an urgent response to the war-ravaged economy and its pressing need for labor, which urged the British government to decide on the creation of various initiatives to attract immigrants from former colonies and Commonwealth nations. The British Nationality Act, enacted in 1948, awarded 800 million people the right to claim British citizenship (Joppke, 1999, p. 101) and eventually facilitated migration to the United Kingdom from the Commonwealth and the colonies. This change in immigration policy triggered the beginning of mass immigration, known as the 'Windrush Generation,' particularly from the Caribbean and South Asian countries. Windrush and similar mass movements of people to Britain accelerated with the support of the 1948 Act and Britain's need for unskilled labor; however, the whole immigration policy changed in the following years, which imposed stricter controls on immigration with the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 and the subsequent Immigration Act of 1971. The toughening of British legislation gave way to a more selective approach, promoting the migration of mostly skilled and highly qualified individuals. These transformations in the UK reflected the complex and evolving nature of British immigration policy in the post-2nd World War decades, shaped by economic needs, political considerations, and changing societal dynamics.

Keywords: Racism, British Empire, Immigration Policies, Colonies, Windrush, European Union, British Politics

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I. Introduction

According to the UNHCR's study and report, the primary causes of modern migration influx, especially towards Europe and the UK, include economic inequalities between affluent and impoverished

nations, internal political or social conflicts, and severe human rights violations worldwide (Cutts, 2000). Numerous push and pull factors significantly shape migration patterns to Britain and Europe (Brettell and Hollifield, 2000:102-3, 141-42, 146-47). People encountering a new challenge amidst all these movements and



struggles, such as racist attitudes in their adopted homeland, is by no means a novel situation, one that became particularly evident after the 2nd World War. However, these attitudes were often disregarded by the government of the hosting country or would be perceived as a regular habit by the other actors in the new homeland. This was because, among many different reasons, the concept of racism itself, by the standards of history, is relatively new, having emerged in the previous century (Alexander, 2019: n.p.), though its practices were widespread.

A significant absence in even the most reputed of previous academic works written on racist approaches to immigrants lies in the general negligence of the need to define and describe frameworks for the very broad-ranging and generalizing term “racism”; most publications using this word seem to take it for granted that all readers share an understanding of, and implied definitions of, the word and related concepts.¹ Previous academic works often use the term or some other variations like “ethnic” or “colored” or prefer grouping them that require no further scrutiny in the contexts of their particular arguments. For the present study, however, where racism itself is to be examined, a clear and specific definition is needed. One non-reductionist definition that would fit our perspective is Grosfoguel’s, which suggests that racism entails a worldwide system of ranking individuals based on perceived superiority and inferiority, established and perpetuated over centuries through political, cultural, and economic means within the framework of the capitalist/patriarchal, western-centric/Christian-centric, modern/colonial world system (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 10). Perceived superiority and inferiority can be marked by attitudes that focus on various discriminatory factors such as skin color, ethnic background, language, cultural differences, and religious affiliation (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 10).

These are some of the markers of racial discrimination observed in the policies, practices as well as the discourse around immigration in Britain during the period investigated by this paper, which reports on a study aimed at revealing neglected (Kushner, 2012, p. 13) racist practices and attitudes, if any, towards immigrants in the United Kingdom in the two decades following the 2nd World War. This particular period is significant since it coincided with the UK’s realization of its empire’s and colonial power’s retreat (Sanders, 1990, pp. 1-6), which occurred alongside inherited racism related to immigration (Joppke, 1999, pp. 100-110), and was also coeval with intensified linkages with Europe. In the post-imperial and decolonizing decades, many individuals from the Caribbean or the Indian subcontinent migrated to Britain compared to earlier times. This migration introduced race-related issues associated with the imperial and colonial legacy (Davies, 1996, p.

¹The investigation supports scholarly inquiries that have revealed a conspicuous absence of a precise definition or delineation of the framework of racism in the majority of sources; I have examined a broad range of materials, including articles, books, newspapers, and news within the purview of this study. Bibliographic details of these works are given in the reference section.

1070). Along with its aim to find and examine racist elements in the British political perspectives related to immigration during this period, the paper will seek to provide an overview of the reception and perception of the controversy on racism by the policymakers in the UK in the mentioned period. In brief, the study will scrutinize the problem from a multifaceted and comprehensive perspective. In this way, it attempts to avoid the weaknesses of research, which, because of a different focus, often perpetuates a significantly narrowed understanding of historical racism, neglecting the multilayers and complexity of the problem.

II. A Historical Perspective into the Immigrant Cohorts in the United Kingdom and Shaping the Contours of British Cultural Identity

Its past and present show the British Isles as representing a complex amalgamation of geographical and political structures, providing a nuanced nomenclature without succumbing to potentially erroneous terminology. A conducive climate and inhabitable land coupled with navigable surrounding seas (McDowall, 1989, p. 3) have attracted people to the islands throughout its history. Therefore, several different peoples invaded or came to settle on the islands from prehistorical through to medieval times; some (but not all) of them were Celts around 700 BC, Romans around AD 43, Anglo-Saxons in the 5th century AD, and Vikings towards the end of the 8th century AD. In the 11th century, England and most of Wales were invaded by the Normans (Augustyn, 2024: n.p.), an era that bestowed the Magna Carta and the beginnings of Parliament (McDowall, 1989, pp. 28-30).

Nevertheless, 800 years after the Norman invasions, Great Britain had turned into a colonizer, ruling almost one-fifth of the world’s population, which de facto enlarged her borders with many territories and hundreds of millions of people of various racial and religious backgrounds. This has led to the arrival of such diverse human communities and their coexistence in the British Isles. In other words, Britain attracted not only traders, artisans, and merchants from regions of the “ancient world” (Tabili, 2011, p. 15) but also people from the more far-flung British colonies in Asia and Africa, mainly when the 2nd World War was over. In other words, the colonial migrants were interwoven ethnically and socio-culturally in Great Britain, with assimilation and variable degrees of conserving their sense of cultural identity. The nature of this interweaving was perceived or hoped to conserve migrants’ senses of individual identity, as the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins put it when, in the mid-1960s, ‘I do not think that we need in this country a “melting pot” ...I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’ (Banton, in Joppke, 1999:225).

Furthermore, through centuries of colonization, the history of the United Kingdom had become inextricable from world history, and the millions of people who migrated to (and within) this country were an outcome of expanding colonization reality. Therefore,

even though the impact on the United Kingdom of “the retreat from Empire” (Sanders, 1990, pp. 1-6) coincided with the emergence of other superpowers (Sanders:1990:1), it continued to appeal to people from all over the world, especially from its overseas territories; the migration of people to the islands itself constituted a significant phenomenon in this appeal. Notably, the years after World War II saw a peak in immigration to the UK from countries of its colonial past (Joppke, 1999, p. 100).

Following the 2nd World War, there was an influx of individuals migrating to Britain, which aligned with the country's imperial withdrawal. The motivations for migration varied. Several refugees were escaping persecution, seeking asylum and security due to political circumstances (Kushner, 2012: 6-7). Additionally, there were instances where individuals were coerced into coming to the United Kingdom against their wishes, either through kidnapping or enslavement (Sherwood, 2007: n.p). Primarily, however, most migrants were driven by economic motives, as they sought employment opportunities and a better quality of life (Our Migration Story, n.d.). Britain welcomed immigrants and sometimes did not (Kushner, 2012, p. 5). Some integrated into British society quickly and easily, while for others, it was a constant struggle. Because of this, particularly after the end of the 2nd World War, members of minorities had to organize and take action for recognition of their right to stay and belong (Modood & Salt, 2011).

Migrants from distant countries have, perhaps always and everywhere, been seen as outsiders, aliens, or ‘the other,’ especially where their customs, clothes, food, and beliefs are very different from, and therefore strange to those inhabitants. Migrants from the distant colonies, especially in the large numbers that arrived after the 2nd World War, were seen in the United Kingdom in this way (Herbert, 2008, pp. 34-47; Myers, 2012, pp. 33-44). Nevertheless, over time, they adapted to Great Britain and became British² Both concerning documentation and culture, and what ‘Britishness’ means eventually changed to include them (Kushner, 2012:13-15,19-20,21-33; Uberoi et al., 2011, pp. 205-224). Some of those who migrated at earlier times joined those who were suspicious of the next arrivals until they, too, became part of a Britishness that was ever-adapting to include new arrivals. Even if the concept is a relatively modern one, an example from the late

²According to the Oxford English Dictionary and Online Etymology Dictionary: It derives from a Celtic word which is the equivalent of Britto in Latin and old English Bryttisc or Brettisc “of or relating to (ancient) Britons,” from Bryttas or Brettas “natives of ancient Britain”. The meaning “of or about Great Britain” is from c. 1600; the noun meaning “inhabitants of Great Britain” is from 1640s. British Empire is from c. 1600. First modern record of the British Isles is from 1620s. British English was the form of the English language spoken in Britain by 1862 (George P. Marsh). According to McDowall, the name Britain comes from the word “Pretani”, the Greco-Roman word for the inhabitants of Britain. The Romans mispronounced the word and called the island “Brittania” (McDowall, 1989, 8).

16th century resembled the mentioned metamorphosis of “Britishness,” and on some occasions, many British local guilds asked the government to enact laws against the Dutch and the Flemish artisans, fleeing religious persecution from their lands, simply because they were blamed responsible for the economic as well as social deterioration of the time in Britain (Norris, 2022: n.p.). Regardless of all their significant contributions to Britain’s economy and artisan expertise, these aliens were perceived as threats. This xenophobia led to outright violence against them (Norris, 2022: n.p.), even though many of the complaining guild members were themselves immigrants from different parts of Europe, Africa, or the Middle East (B.B.C, 2024: n.p.).

Wherever they came from and regardless of their ethnic as well as geographical background, people who migrated to the United Kingdom in the 20th century, as in the past, left a deep and profound cultural and social impact, affecting language, fashion, food, music, literature as well as the religious life in the country (Tabili, 2011, pp. 2-4), defining the boundaries of ‘Britishness’. Yet, “Britishness” (Frere et al., 2024) was and is a very vague concept relating to a mishmash of elements, including ill-defined so-called common values (Kushner, 2012, pp. 22-24), which might even lead to the term “unBritish.” However, Britishness was defined; it inevitably left some people out, and these were usually the immigrants who had already been regarded as ‘the other.’ In this situation, the broad concept of otherness meets the definition of racism described above.

III. Adjoining the UK to a Re-Shaping Europe

The post-war European nations were not only in pursuit of peace but also sought solutions to pressing economic issues, notably the geographical separation of raw materials from industrial processing capabilities. The war left them in a state of physical and financial exhaustion, which resembled the conditions of their colonies (Davies, 1996, p. 1068). Their industrial infrastructure lay in ruins, and the former allies were worried about the effectiveness of their defenses in deterring possible threats (Davies, 1996, pp. 1058-1071), such as the USSR, which represented one of ‘the others’ vis-à-vis a sense of European-ness that was being redefined along with new political borders.

British foreign policy was not solely preoccupied with the threat posed by the Soviet Union. It also focused on identifying a fresh role in a rapidly evolving global landscape and adapting to shifting relationships with allies, especially with the United States, European nations, and members of the Commonwealth—an emerging voluntary union of former British colonies (Sanders, 1990, p. 1; McDowall, 1989, p. 168). Nevertheless, the war weakened the links between the colonial Europeans and their annexed overseas territories, despite their appetite for keeping the territories and close adherence with the annexed lands; the depleted colonial countries no longer had the resources to restore war-weary Europe. From this time onwards, imperialist countries, including Britain, were not different from any other sovereign states on the

continent (Davies, 1996, pp. 1068-1070). They suffered considerable economic setbacks, particularly in the form of lost advantages such as access to inexpensive raw materials and exclusive markets in their colonies (Davies, 1996, p. 1070).

Both during and after the war, the UK faced the scarcity of resources from its colonies, some of which had already obtained independence, such as the thirteen colonies in North America in 1776 (today's USA) and Canada in 1867 or changed their status, particularly after the Balfour Declaration of 1926, like Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa. Additionally, the country had been significantly dependent on low-paid and unskilled laborers (Rattansi, 1995, p. 24), which turned into an acute shortage, particularly right after the war. Immigrants could meet this deficiency in labor. As Herbert claimed that "the colonial legacy had effectively secured the colonies' role as 'economic peripheries of metropolitan colonial power' or as Brah has noted, from once being a source of cheap raw materials, the colonies were now a source of cheap labour" (Herbert, 2008:14). Interestingly, some British institutions such as the newly-formed National Health Service (NHS, established in July 1948), sought to recruit medics (Spencer, 1997: 41-42; Herbert, 2008:35-36; NHS History, n.d.); as well as the Post Office, and the London Transport recruited clerks and workers from Britain's overseas territories, especially from the Caribbeans in order to attract low-paid labour (Maxwell, 2012:74). Nevertheless, that does not mean that all these institutions had open door policy, quite the contrary, many job opportunity which was advertised was only 'paper' vacancy, meaning it would be available while the white workers were moving jobs; with almost zero chance to occupy middle or high-ranking positions of the civil service by the 'coloured' immigrants (Rattansi, 1995:28).

While Britain, digesting a retreat empire, was much occupied with its new role among the three interlocking circles (Sanders: 1990:1), which was already mentioned in section II, with the support of the US, countries in Western Europe decided to leave behind the former hostilities and work together as a response to the challenges of Europe caused by the war. With this zeal, they formed pretty several institutions in the late 40s and 50s, first for political and later for economic cooperation, like the Council of Europe, OECD, NATO, ECSC, Euratom, EEC, and many more (Borchardt, 2000:5-10 & Sanders, 1990:135-138). The idea of a community of European member countries was further developed in many groups and initiatives established in the post-war decades, details of which are given in Lenearts, Van Nuffel, and Corthaut (7- 13 et al.).

This collective effort aimed at creating a safe zone, democratic countries in Europe, and a zone of economic prosperity. However, it was apparent that Britain hesitated to join, particularly the institutions that would restrict its historical ties and diminish its sovereignty to some supranational institutions (Sanders, 1990, p. 139): it preferred to continue her unique relations with the USA (McDowall, 1989, p. 168) and give it unreserved support (Davies, 1996, p. 1075) while, at the same time, it would enjoy all the economic benefits of Europe without losing her sovereignty and historical ties; secondly, there was a belief among the British elites

that the UK was still a world power and joining the European institutions would lead its compromise that status (Kenealy, 2016:n.p.). It needed some more years until Britain realized its loss of political power internationally (McDowall, 1989, p. 169) and understood that to recover from weakened economic strength, joining the European institutions established for economic cooperation such as EEC (European Economic Community, founded in 1957) was essential (Sanders, 1990, pp. 135-140).

The UK applied in 1961 and acceded to EEC in 1973, after delays caused by persistent objections from the French (Davies, 1996: 1075; Sanders: 1990: 138-141).

Although Britain acceded to some European institutions, its attitude towards the EC remained unenthusiastic, and its trade with the European countries drastically increased (McDowall, 1989, p. 174). The British government preferred to make and implement Britain's policies, including immigration policies based solely on British interests. Even after accession to the EC (later the EU in the 90s), the United Kingdom often sought to 'opt-out' of many European policies and initiatives. Due to its unique stance and approach, Britain has confronted accusations claiming that it willingly disregarded the EU developments and designed policies that are closer to those of the USA than to those of other European states (McDowall, 1989, pp. 173-174; Sanders: 1990:146-147; Joppke, 1999, pp. 100-102). Geddes went so far as to assert that the United Kingdom, in the realm of its immigration policies, has sought policy lessons from the United States (Geddes, 2003, p. 29) as well as implemented stricter controls than other European states concerning immigration policies.

Such disharmony with the European institutions caught our attention and became one of the reasons why this study was carried out. In the context of immigrant policies, a crucial aspect pertains to the centralization of concepts related to race and perceived racial distinctions. The policy framework governing race relations in Britain has historically revolved around stringent immigration control, mainly targeting individuals considered undesirable, such as those from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean (Geddes: 2003:30), at least within the time limit of this study. This approach has led to a distinctive impact, shaping discussions on race and ethnic distinctions within the British social and political discourse on immigration and its consequences to a degree, almost every day, not mirrored in many other European nations (Geddes, 2003, pp. 30-31).

It should be emphasized that the economic differences between the rich and underdeveloped countries were enlarged further immediately after the 2nd World War as European states decided to work together in the forms of various economic and political initiatives and programs their colonies lacked in most cases. Once Europe became more prosperous, people from the former colonies planned to migrate to the wealthy continent, especially to Great Britain. Nevertheless, following the end of the war, the emergence of social and economic issues brought deploring consequences on the British stance on immigration (Hansen, 2000), primarily due to the public perception that the immigrants triggered economic and



social problems. Growing discontent led to migration restrictions in the UK and the European states in the 60s and onwards. Consequently, within the past few decades, migration to Europe was regarded as a “threat” to the national security of the EU states and the UK. This understanding was primarily caused by the lack of will and ambition to create a mutual immigration and asylum policy binding for all parties. Moreover, it has been argued by many scholars that although there was a flow of immigrants into the EU borders, inconsistencies between legal practice among the member states and the European Court of Justice, as well as community law and Human Rights, still exist.

IV. Racial & Colonial Perspectives of Immigration in the UK after the 2nd World War

On the one hand, the UK had a long history of empire and superiority over the other Western powers' diversity and geographical coverage when its colonies were concerned. The mentioned superiority started to change when it lost the colonies one by one, starting from the American War of Independence in the late 18th century. This loss was intensified after each of the two world wars. This shrinking of the empire eventually had its implications for the British immigration policies, particularly in the decades following the end of the 2nd World War. For this reason, the period analyzed in this study has roots and logic stemming from the shrinkage of the British Empire. On the other hand, the United Kingdom was accused of pursuing an ethnicity policy in general speaking, which concerns colored groups surpassing 20 percent of the current total population, mainly from British Commonwealth countries (I.W. Hooper, 1955; Spencer, 1997). The number of blacks from Asian colonies was negligible before the 2nd World War, and those fewer numbers served for the British armed forces during the war. Interestingly, after the war, British governments eagerly accepted immigrants, particularly from the Commonwealth and the colonies, including African blacks and Asians, who created temporary convenience and confidence in the official circles. Nevertheless, this comfort was not going to last long for Britain.

As is well known and discussed in migration literature, the British mass immigration concerning the analyzed period coincided with post-World War II years, especially the 50s and the 60s, when massive groups came first from the West Indies and, slightly later, from the Indian subcontinent. These groups, also named ‘Windrush,’ came directly from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh or via East Africa (Maxwell, 2012). The British Nationality Act of 1948 equipped UK citizens with similar unrestricted rights, and those were comprised of the Commonwealth and the UK colonies’ nationals. June 1948, the proclamation date of the act, coincided with the arrival of the first black immigrants aboard from Jamaica. That was when the Cabinet Economy Policy Committee (CEPE) indicated that the newcomers were ‘private persons traveling at their own expense’ and thus could not be stopped; CEPE welcomed immigrants and did not exercise any restrictions. Nevertheless, the archives reveal that both the Labour (1945-1951)

and the Conservative governments’ (1951-1955) reaction towards the black migrants was similar; considerable hostility to black migrants was observed in their discussions, which showed their desire and need to keep the immigrants out of Britain (Rattansi, 1995, p. 27) while, at the same time, both adopted laissez-faire policy towards the migrants. Those governments planned to implement various administrative measures to keep the minimum number of black immigrants (Rattansi, 1995, p. 27).

However, this picture was to change soon when mass migration triggered by the mentioned Act added to others brought a sharp increase of approximately 136,400 people in 1961 (Hansard, 1965), forcing the UK government to intervene. When this intervention news was circulated in the colonies and the Commonwealth countries, immigrants to Britain sharply increased, especially in 1961, due to the fear that the British government was preparing a regulation limiting the number of immigrants into the UK (Daniells, 1958).

The news was correct, and accordingly, the Immigration Act of 1962 was enacted by the English government to limit the migrant flows from the commonwealth countries, particularly to curb the ‘colored’ migration (Herbert, 2008). A sharp increase in the number of migrants from the colonies was not the only factor for the British government to work on legislation that aimed to stop the ‘colored’ migrations. However, social issues accelerated the process, such as the disquieting race riots in Notting Hill and London of 1958, which uncovered the ethical tensions present in British society (Steinberg, 2000). The beginning of the problem dates back to the 1950s when a predominantly Caribbean community started to reside in the Notting Hill neighborhood. However, it reached its climax in August 1958, when many British young white men attacked the immigrants of Caribbean origin with knives, chains, and even petrol bombs. The violence took more than two weeks. The tensions, which accumulated over time, were the outcomes of the negligence over the conditions of the migrants and the laissez-faire approach of the British central government towards immigrant settlements, disregarding its responsibility over immigration policies. Interestingly, discussions seeking to justify the legitimacy of government policies on laissez-faire continued. Their point was that the state would not be considered a monolithic entity only guided by some interest groups and that the racist treatment of ‘colored’ immigrants would encourage Communist sympathies among the present and the future leaders of black Commonwealth communities (Rattansi, 1995, p. 31), during an era of Cold War, too.

When the immigrants in the late 40s and early 50s were aboard, the central British governments did not exercise and had well-structured integration applications and programs besides providing equal opportunities. On the contrary, the local authorities were required to educate settlers even though not all would follow the same approach. This contradictory British policy inevitably created discrepancies in treatment and applications towards the migrants in the local environments. West Indians were lucky in that respect as they spoke English, but many others, such as the Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis, had English language difficulties



(FitzGerald, 1994). For some reason, the central British governments assumed that with time and education, the immigrants would adapt to the British way of life and gain acceptance in the community. Even if there existed some local and minor efforts to integrate migrants into the United Kingdom, and thus would turn them, in time, into the expected “Britishness,” these did not stop a few of the British politicians from abusing these groups coming from multi-ethnic and religious backgrounds by making references in their mainstream policies. Some even followed a racist campaign; an example came during the 1964 general elections, like the Conservative MP candidate, Peter Griffiths, who won with the slogan stating: “If you want a nigger for a neighbor, vote Labour” (Jeffries, 2014; Jackson, 2016). Such a racist approach was just one of the problems the immigrants faced upon their arrival in the UK.

Especially black migrants coming to Britain after the end of the 2nd World War were met with many issues, like settling in poorer areas in British cities (Rattansi, 1995, p. 25) from where whites gradually moved out, a social movement later labeled as ‘white flight.’³ The above-mentioned violent movements in Nothing Hill in London, as well as the ‘white flight’ (Shain, 2013) and ‘segregation’ issues in prominent English cities (Johnston, 2005; Ford, 2004; Herbert, 2008), tolled the alarm bell for the British governments which led them to think about the consequences and precautions. The Nothing Hill race riots, together with the white-flight movement, triggered both the initiation of new British policies against racism and counter actions by the immigrants themselves in the form of, but not limited to, organized movement, mass abandonment of the UK (Baikin, 2008); in fact, migrants departing Britain reached thousands in number.

Upon these issues, British governments tended to keep adjustment and integration of the immigrants and retain their inclusion in the hands of the state. The governments even sought to turn it into a state policy similar to that of Germany and not leave the immigrants’ adaptation to local administrators or society, as Joppke explained in his work (Joppke, 1999). In time, the British Immigration Act enacted in 1962 changed several times, especially in 1968 and in 1971, along with changes in perception of citizenship ranging from the concept of belonging to the British crown to the idea of “partiality,” which confronted criticism from the European Court of Human Rights for being discriminatory between whites and blacks or other ethnical groups (East Africans, 1973; Hansen, 2000).

Interestingly, much of the academic study of migration and settlement in Britain is critical of state policies, ethnocentrism, racism, the exploitation of migrant labor, and, more generally, structured inequalities (Bottomley, 1992). In contrast to this idea, earlier researchers in Britain tended to conclude that immigrants would gradually integrate once the language difficulties and other

³Name was given to a study of the movement of white people in masses from racially and/or ethnoculturally diverse areas to the white dominant, particularly in the 50s and in the '60s.

cultural barriers were overcome. This would bring forth the surprising question of ‘What?’ (Bottomley, 1992). The answer to this question was up to the powers that be, and author David Turns participated in the discussion with his comment and stated:

“...race-related offenses in the UK need to be seen as a form of expression where basic freedom is subject to certain restrictions in the interest of a greater good. Race-related offenses exist in UK statutes, both as torts and as crimes; additionally, certain common law crimes can relate to manifestations or racism if certain specific characteristics are present” (Turns, 2000, p. 49).

It is almost evident that while there was no provision in the UK law expressly covering xenophobia, there was no shortage of legal sanctions for more general manifestations of racism before 1965. However, the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of public order offenses were severely undermined by appearing somewhat underused in practice against offenders (Turns, 2000). Moreover, even if the British government attempted to pass anti-racist laws, particularly the Race Relations Act of 1965, because it only covered discrimination in specified public places (A History of human, 2018), and another act in 1968 focused on eradicating discrimination in housing and employment, had borne, because of the mentioned limitations, with weak enforcement capabilities (Sooben, 1990).

V. Discussion & Perspectives on British Nation & Race

When the overall policy on immigration is concerned, the UK has represented the most well-known country in the Western hemisphere for its ‘would-be zero immigration’ policy after the restrictive laws and regulations ignited in the 60s and 70s (Layton-Henry, 1986). The UK has not approved immigration because its political boundaries were more comprehensive than the British nation’s. The immigrants coming to the UK from colonies were formally regarded as co-nationals. This acceptance had inadequate substantive sentiments in the official circles and the public eye, which would request some linkages and ties of belonging to the British nation (Joppke, 1999, pp. 100-101).

This phenomenon has led to an exploitation of the political boundaries, which were eventually drawn too expansively and with some ambiguity to define where the boundaries of the British empire started and ended (Joppke, 1999). The main reason behind this idea was Britain’s devolution from a global colonial empire to a regional European power, particularly in the second half of the 20th century (Geddes, 2003), with the American Revolution in 1776. Some scholars even argued that the obsession with losing an empire has negatively but profoundly influenced the British immigration policy and left unfavorable results such as racial discrimination (Joppke, 1999, pp. 100-104).

At this point, it can be asserted that under usual circumstances, an immigration policy is usually expected to be based on mutually agreed upon and common concepts like citizenship. This notion makes divisions between those who belong and those who do not (Joppke, 1999, p. 101), recognizing the contribution of all cultures

to the nation's development (Kushner, 2012, p. 20). Contrary to this understanding, Britain's policy on immigration failed to include a meaningful concept of citizenship and established an apparent primary loyalty to Britain (Kushner, 2012, p. 20). This lack eventually led to a push for the British immigration policy, which would work under operation on a proxy, i.e., the proxy of race (Joppke, 1999, p. 101). Former Home Secretary Reginald Maudling's speech set out the dilemma of immigration policy of the relevant time when he stated that:

"while one talked always and rightly about the need to avoid discrimination between black and white, it is a simple fact of human nature that for the British people there is a great difference between Australians and New Zealanders, for example, who come of British stock, and people from Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent who were equally subjects of the Queen and entitled to total equality before the law when established here, but who in appearance, habits, religion and culture, were different from us" (Hansard, 1971, cc42-173).

Maudling's expression revealed the objectives of British migration policy, which converged on race and suggested: do not let in the people of color of the empire who had very loose ties to the empire while on the contrary to this colored exclusion, welcome the descendants of the British white settlers who constituted the majority of the immigrants that were regarded and favored as eligible (Joppke, 1999, p. 101). Furthermore, some scholars even argued 'state racism and whitewashing' of the British immigration policy and assertively stated that racist hostility towards black and Asian immigrants proved a centrally-directed state racism, and their arrivals were met with suspicion within the official circles (Geddes, 2003; Kushner, 2012, p. 12).

Official suspicion of immigrants inevitably created control. Britain's famous obsession with 'control' was categorically one of the racial issues, while the regulations were indirectly discriminatory towards races. One can easily perceive that the reason behind the immigration policy of the UK was to bring about the British homeland nation of the old times from the territories of the empire and its colonies before it shrunken (Joppke, 1999, pp. 100-102) and to force and expose the rest to the control of the immigration forces by frightening the already settled and the citizens of Britain of a mass intrusion and immigration of hundreds of millions of people from the former colonies.

On the one hand, as Joppke explained: "that the nation was predominantly white, while large sections of the empire were non-white, is the root cause of racial bias in British immigration policy" (Joppke, 1999, p. 102). On the other hand, problems due to the discriminatory acts were not confined to newness and language difficulties, nor was it simply that migrants were unwilling to adapt to their new country. Instead, empirical evidence showed they continued to be disadvantaged regarding the most critical indicators for which ethnically based statistics were available (FitzGerald, 1994). Part of the reason was discrimination, both direct and indirect. There were signs that adverse experiences were having a still more negative, alienating effect on the second

generation and warnings that those who were better able to integrate would not continue to be unable to do so but might reject that option (FitzGerald, 1994).

The entire immigration experience of Great Britain was represented in the particular reaction towards the first few hundreds of Jamaicans who landed on British shores. Interestingly, the same Cabinet Economy Policy Committee, which supported Jamaican landing on the British shores, requested from the responsible Colonial Office an action 'to prevent the occurrence of similar incidents in the future' (Paul, 1992, pp. 452-473). Britain's Jamaican 'occupation' experience in 1948 would also be expressed in another way, which was explained in academic research by Joppke with an astonishing statement:

"Immigration policy both suffered from and aggravated the problem of identity, demolishing the Whig-imperialist illusion in excluding certain subjects of empire while having no alternative model of membership and community to build upon. Nevertheless, forced to define who belongs, British immigration policy resorted to birth and ancestry, thus introducing an ethnic marker that had so far been absent from the definition of Britishness. That the ethnic marker was, in effect, also a racial marker between whites and non-whites is the root cause of the charge of racial discrimination, from which British immigration policy could never quite liberate itself" (Joppke, 1999).

Despite all of these race-related attitudes, attacks, and policies, there was a new phenomenon shaping and being supported by many, namely, multi-racial Britain (Kushner, 2012, p. 14). Moreover, migration to the UK from Asian as well as black communities and former colonies since 1945 has borne the characteristics of the migration of a complex variety of communities stemming from highly diverse backgrounds and qualifications. It is a known fact that British immigration policy classified them under the 'colored' category and prevented their entry. Nevertheless, interestingly, it was the same Great Britain that, on the one hand, worked efficiently to influence anti-discrimination legislation in the European Union until the Brexit of 2020, but on the other hand, maintained its traditional but rigid external frontier controls (Joppke, 1999, pp. 134-137) and hesitated to transfer her powers to the supranational EU institutions (Geddes, 2003, p. 30).

VI. Conclusion

To conclude, when one closely observes the trajectory of British immigration policies after the 2nd World War, it is a nuanced and multifaceted topic encompassing three dimensions: historical, political, and racial. The 'colored' people in history were almost invisible in the United Kingdom until the settlement of blacks coming from the former colonies in South Asia. In the immediate periods following the end of the 2nd World War, the British government emphasized encouraging immigrants, mainly from her former colonies and Commonwealth nations. The enthusiasm of the British government was a response to the dire need for labor and the economic challenges faced by the country in the wake of the war.



The Critical British Nationality Act of 1948 meant a dramatic shift since it granted British citizenship to people from the Commonwealth countries regardless of their color, which caused the migration wave known as the Windrush generation. This initial period was categorized as ideal because all 800 million people were British subjects, and this right was not questioned (Hansen, 2000). This was much better voiced by Henry Hopkins, the Colonial Secretary of the time, to the House of Commons:

As the law stands, any British subject from the Colonies could enter this country at any time as long as he could produce satisfactory evidence of his British status. That is something we want to avoid tampering with lightly. In a world where restrictions on personal movement and immigration have increased, we still take pride in the fact that a man can say Civic Britannicus sum, whatever his color. We take pride in the fact that he wants and can come to the mother country (Hansard, 1954).

The Windrush did not stop in the 60s, let alone the 70s; on the contrary, the migrations increased. This rise frightened the power that be and gave way to subsequent legislative measures, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 and the Immigration Act of 1971 being the most significant. These laws indicated a new understanding and a new era of immigration packed with control. This study uncovered the motives behind such tightening of the controls. They were related to the concerns about racial tensions, cultural assimilation, and broader societal changes in rapidly transforming Britain. The policymakers were racialized, and they regarded people of black or Asian origin as an issue to be dealt with (Spencer, 1997). Furthermore, the acts aimed to welcome whites and curb the black and Asian subjects of the Empire. Moreover, those lucky to enter and stay were socially locked to specific areas in big cities and barely enjoyed the high-paid jobs or 'developed England's economic and social benefits.

This study aimed to underline the critical aspect of race within the framework of British immigration policies, perceptions, and applications. The downsize from a global empire to a regional European power, especially after 2nd World War, triggered the reshaping of the relationship of the UK with its former colonies. This shift, in turn, had deeply affected the British government's immigration policies, which increasingly underscored the role of race (Joppke, 1999: 100). On the one hand, white immigrants were more easily and readily accepted to migrate to the UK whereas non-white immigrants sparked a debate over racial bias, discrimination, and integration challenges. Despite the complexities of race, the UK has witnessed the emergence of a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society in which immigrants come and settle from diverse backgrounds (Kushner, 2012, p. 14). Furthermore, as many research results testify, black or Asian immigrants are faced with many discriminatory acts and behaviors in both official and private circles (Spencer, 1997).

To sum up, the British immigration policies played a significant role in shaping the European Union's anti-discrimination legislation before Brexit, which illustrated the UK's dual role as a proponent of anti-discrimination initiatives while concurrently

maintaining her harsh external border controls, which was mainly the result of British suspicious of transfers of power when harmonization was concerned, but it willingly took part in EU policies when it was clear that British interested would be served (Hansen, 2000). This work emphasizes the intricate interplay between race, identity, and immigration policies in periods following the 2nd World War Britain, highlighting the legacy of these policies and their enduring impact on British society in particular and the European landscape in general.

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