

Is a Generous Immigration Policy a Way to Rectify for Colonial Injustices?

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Migration from former colonies to former colonial powers represents a large part of the 20th century migration. The question discussed in this article is if a generous immigration policy on behalf of persons from former colonies is an appropriate means for the European nations and former colonial powers to compensate for colonial injustices.

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Introduction

Migration from former colonies to former colonial powers represents a large part of the 20th century migration. This migration has been facilitated by generous laws regarding immigration and citizenship. For example, before 1949, every person born in the British Empire was according to common law a British subject and Commonwealth citizen. As a consequence many Indians, Pakistanis and people from the Caribbean immigrated to the United Kingdom. In spite of more restrictive immigration acts intended to limit the number of immigrants, the total number of Commonwealth immigrants to the United Kingdom is estimated to 2.5 million from 1962 until 2011.¹

Immigration to France shows a similar picture. All in all in 2005 France had almost 5 million immigrants, i.e. people born outside of France. About 1/3 of the total foreign born immigrants in France come from the former colonies Algeria and Morocco and approximately 6% of the French population consist of people of Maghreb origin. Similar to Britain, even France provided the citizens from its colonies privileged immigration status. For example the Evian Accords regulating the relations between France and Algeria after Algeria's independence stated a "freedom of movement" between the two countries.² Likewise, post-war immigration to the Netherlands consisted mainly of immigrants from former colonies, not least Moluccans who

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¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_to_the_United_Kingdom_since_1922, viewed on 29.10.2012.

² Phillip Chiviges Naylor, *France and Algeria. A History of Decolonization and Transformation*, Gainesville 2000, pp. 65, 83-84.