

international order. In general, the weight of Western public opinion supports the freedom of movement of goods, services, and capital.¹⁸ For example, although public opinion varies with the particularities of domestic politics, most educated citizens of the developed world support free trade and do not consider it to threaten the national interest.¹⁹ This support provides further evidence that free market capitalism has become hegemonic in the post-Cold War era.²⁰ However, many of those who support the other tenets of the liberal world order are *against* immigration.²¹ While states eliminated their explicitly discriminatory immigration policies during the postcolonial era in the spirit of these liberal principles, the public remains firmly suspicious of newcomers.

Second, although states eliminated racially discriminatory policies, their objective policies have become more prohibitive in recent decades.²² Some scholars use the Western public's insatiable appetite for discriminating against undesirable immigrants to argue that migrants of color bear the brunt of these restrictions.²³ Leaders lend credence to these critics when they refer to migrants as "parasites and protozoa" (Jaroslaw Kaczynski),²⁴ "bank robbers" (Boris Johnson),²⁵ and a "swarm" (David Cameron)²⁶ that is "carrying diseases" (Andrzej Duda)²⁷ to "threaten Christian Europe" (Victor Orbán).²⁸ Yet, at the same time, many of those same leaders proclaim that their immigration policies are "non-discriminatory" (Australia) because they are based on "universal" (US), "clear" (Germany), or "objective" (UK) grounds.²⁹ This juxtaposition suggests that these objective laws may serve nonobjective goals, and that evidence of inequality is not coincidental.³⁰ However, one

The Exclusionary Politics of International Migration

The Australian case evokes international migration's status as the most politicized area of world politics. No other issue so easily elicits fear from elected states, motivates states to collaborate, and spurs action from leaders. In the past decade, concerns over the movement of people swung the Brexit referendum, elected populist leaders, affected citizenship policies, and produced staggering levels of collaboration between the European Union and its neighbors.¹⁴ Immigration engenders these responses because it taps into primordial questions of politics and the human experience: What is a political community? Who are the legitimate members of that community? How do we balance the interests of different groups within that community? What do we owe outsiders? The existential nature of these questions ensures that international migration will intervene in almost any political issue, international or domestic. Moreover, it is unlikely that conflicts over immigrants will abate because citizens in both the global North and global South have become increasingly reluctant to welcome outsiders into their communities.¹⁷

Two patterns stand out when one examines the politics of international migration in more detail. First, the pronounced public hand-wringing over immigration is an outlier when compared to the other tenets of the liberal

14. Bonilla-Silva 2006; Feagin 2006.

15. Alexander 1996.

16. Alarini 2017; Dennison and Geddes 2019; Goodwin and Milazzo 2017; Hansen and

Randeria 2016; McAlexander 2020.

17. Buehler, Fabbe, and Han 2020; Semyonov, Rajman, and Gorodzejsky 2006; Cogley,

18. Murray 2019.

19. Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006.

20. Milanovic 2019.

21. Mayda 2008.

22. Peters 2017.

23. Ayars et al. 2009; Chatham House 2017; Douglas, Sáenz, and Murga 2015; Ellermann and Goenaga 2019; Ford 2011; K. R. Johnson 2000.

24. Cienski 2015.

25. BBC 2018b.

26. BBC 2015.

27. Al Jazeera 2015.

28. Kamitsching 2015.

29. Dernbach and Starzmann 2018; Dzedzic 2018; Secretary of State 2018; White House 2019.

30. The politics and ethics of race are difficult to navigate. Throughout this book, I use the term *Anglo-European* to refer to countries that laypeople may consider "White" or majority

cannot directly observe their discriminatory intent because the laws are legally color-blind. Ironically, racist laws like White Australia were inferentially useful to expose and combat prejudice because they clearly indicated where racism existed. Without these laws, that relationship, like many instances of racism in the modern world, hides in plain sight.

Some scholars downplay elite rhetoric and public opinion. After all, sovereign states have the right to control their borders,³¹ and many leaders justify their restrictive policies on these grounds.³² As long as the letter of the law is race-neutral, it does not make sense to conclude that states continue to restrict on the basis of race. Politicians changed explicitly racist laws, and now all potential migrants are welcome if they meet certain objective criteria. In this world, leaders, publics, and putative migrants are rational actors, and migration occurs when all the incentives line up for all the parties. Individuals decide to move if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs,³³ and states accept migrants if they will benefit society.³⁴ For scholars in this camp, there are many factors that produce different immigration policies, such as domestic business interests,³⁵ trade policy,³⁶ and war.³⁷ Immigration policies emerge out of this complex dance among firms, lobbyists, politicians, citizens, and the global economy, all of which vary over time to produce different levels of restrictiveness. But as long as the law forbids racist policies, any arguments linking race to immigration policy or the ability to migrate are ignored or rejected. Some even claim that nativism cannot explain changing levels of restrictiveness because it has remained more or less constant over time.³⁸

For other scholars, the second observation explains the first: citizens of the West are against immigration because they are racist, and elites oblige

³⁰White: "I do so because this term alludes to the role the so-called Anglosphere has played in colonialism and explicitly racist policy throughout world history (Vucetic 2011). Unfortunately, this classification ignores the real diversity within these states and silences these populations. In the absence of a better term, however, I use *Anglo-European* because it connects to the important history that I unpack later in the book.

31. Martin 1989; Opedkin 2012.

32. Hathaway 1994; Shanks 2001.

33. Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969.

34. Adamson 2006; Rudolph 2003.

35. Freeman 1995.

36. Peters 2017.

37. Rudolph 2003.

these desires for discrimination despite their distorting effect on the world economy. Immigration led to a racist backlash in the past, and it leads to a racist backlash today. This backlash occurs because leaders and citizens are explicitly racist against outsiders. In fact, immigration restrictions are inherently racist and are the product of racial capitalism. These policies have racist origins, have always been tied to colonial practices and raced notions of desirability, and continue to directly and indirectly perpetuate racist ends.³⁹ With this perspective, any immigration policy is suspect because "[immigration policies] legitimate racism, feed racism, and are explicable only by racism."⁴⁰ There is no puzzle for those in this group. Western states are more open to the freedom of movement for goods, services, and capital than people because, in such a world, elites and citizens would not have to share a society with racial undesirables, but would still reap the economic benefits of globalization.

This book is a response to both camps.⁴¹ On the one hand, it would be intellectually dishonest to ignore the real progress toward racial equality in the postcolonial era. Decolonization led to the proliferation of new nation-states in the international system, which produced an international society of states that gives a voice to the former victims of Anglo-European colonialism and White supremacy.⁴² This global transition coincided with Western states replacing immigration policies that discriminated on the basis of race with policies that admit immigrants who pass objective, inexplicitly racist criteria.⁴³ This real progress makes it difficult to completely vilify states and their leaders because it is impossible to argue that the problem of racism in the international system has not somewhat abated.

On the other hand, an overly optimistic or uncritical view leaves one blind to the remaining inequalities in the international system. Looking at the letter of the law is just one way that color blindness can blind one to people of racial inequality. Human beings have a natural blind spot for racial in-contexts where such inequality is legally forbidden.⁴⁴ For example,

39. Anderson 2013; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018; Hayter 2000; Sharma 2020.

40. Hayter 2001, 149.

41. To be sure, migration scholars do not fall into two neat camps. These types, and I do not mean to perfectly represent the vast and diverse scholarship on migration policymaking.

42. Bull and Watson 1984; Strang 1990.

43. Joppke 2005, 2.

44. Bonilla-Silva 2006; Sullivan and Tuana 2007.

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the 2016 Brexit referendum, some leaders used racist caricatures of Muslims to argue that "open borders make us less safe,"⁴⁵ while others articulated a desire to protect social services from "objectively" poor and undesirable immigrants and to reassert "self-determination."⁴⁶ These appeals resonated strongly with voters with heightened perceptions of Muslim immigration, even though they lacked a factual basis.⁴⁶ Yet, most policymakers and citizens fail to reckon with these examples, and they neither consider that modern immigration policies may still be racially biased nor interrogate how, in this example, British imperialism was complicit in *producing* that undesirability to begin with. Moreover, such examples run against the argument that nativism is constant and therefore cannot explain policy changes.⁴⁷ While nativism may be constant in rich countries, *exposure* to racial outsiders is not, and public support for the Brexit referendum emerged in response to increased emigration from the postcolonial world. This perspective allows for a nuanced view of how race and racism operate in the international system, does not depend on all politicians and citizens being "old-fashioned" racists, and helps explain how racial inequality in international migration can persist *and worsen* in the absence of legal discrimination.

How Race "Hides" in International Migration

Systemic racial inequality in international migration is a product of three interrelated processes: the need of sovereign states to restrict undesirable immigrants, the legacy of colonialism, and the expansion of sovereignty. These three processes are interdependent, but the story begins with the assumption that "proper" sovereign states control their borders and have an inherent right to exclude foreigners. Modern racial inequality in international migration begins with this assumption, which supposedly goes back to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and motivates leaders to restrict immigration and control their borders. However, I argue that the right to control one's borders is *not* an inherent feature of state sovereignty. Contrary to the rhetoric of most leaders and publics, international legal jurisprudence was ambivalent about border control during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, this "right" only emerged with the rise of the modern, "rational" nation-state during the

nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Modern nation-states were intoxicated with ideologies of progress, which led them to embrace scientific racism as a tool to perfect their societies. In many Anglo-European states, such as the United States and Australia, this transformation coincided with an influx of immigration of racial outsiders due to industrialization, colonialism, and the expansion of global capitalism. Racist migration policies emerged from these historical processes as a means to limit immigration of racial undesirables and protect the sanctity of the native population.⁴⁹ Therefore, the right to border control is not an inherent feature of sovereign states; *it is a modern consequence of racism*. Racism and White supremacy merely ensconced this "right" into the conventional wisdom of how modern states ought to behave.

As a result, racial inequality in migration persists because the desire to limit undesirable immigration never went away, and the norms of sovereignty validate those desires as a legitimate and necessary exercise of state authority. Prior to decolonization, the standard of immigrant desirability was race. In the modern day, elites and citizens continue to clamor for policies that restrict undesirable immigrants, but race is no longer a legally allowable criterion for desirability. Instead, policymakers use supposedly objective criteria to determine desirability, such as education and language. The issue is that these formally "color-blind" criteria are still correlated with race. For example, a US president recently implored Congress to restrict immigration from "shithole countries" in Africa because they threaten the national interest.⁵⁰ However, there is little reflection on what makes some countries dangerous "shitholes" in the first place, or whether citizens deterministically embody their homeland's characteristics. Appearing undesirable often has nothing to do with an individual migrant and instead depends on how explicit racial inequality and colonial exploitation in international politics affects their home country.

This description of how Western states construct non-White migrants as undesirable finds common cause with W.E.B. Du Bois's "The African Roots of War."⁵¹ More specifically, it highlights how long histories of explicit

48. Buzan and Lawson 2015, ch. 4.

49. As Adam McKeown notes in related work, migration control did not emerge as a logical necessity of the international system, but "out of the attempts to exclude people from that system" (McKeown 2020, 3). However, McKeown does not discuss race in his exploration of this history; he focuses on "civilizations" instead.

50. Davis, Stolberg, and Kaplan 2018.

51. Du Bois 1915.

45. Virdee and McGeever 2017.

46. Carl 2018.

legitimacy, as the closing and policing of international borders has become an important symbol of sovereignty. As a result, postcolonial states have built border fences and expelled foreigners at an alarming rate, which has increased racial inequality in migration by inhibiting migration within the global South. This shows that one cannot understand the postcolonial rise of restrictiveness in international migration without appreciating the history of Western colonialism.

This argument reveals how putatively good faith efforts to eliminate racial inequality can create conditions that perpetuate it. However, immigration policymaking takes place on a state-by-state basis, and Anglo-Europeans do not collude to intentionally discriminate against the postcolonial world. Accordingly, it is difficult to provide evidence of systemic racial inequality in this allegedly "color-blind" process. This inferential problem crops up whenever laws and behavior pull in opposite directions, and this book's task is to unmask the bias against non-White migrants that lurks beneath these face-neutral policies.

Why We Need a Measure of Racial Bias

At its core, my argument suggests that removing discriminatory laws is insufficient to dismantle racial hierarchies in the postcolonial international system. A significant proportion of the migrants the West now restricts on "objective" grounds come from countries that bore the brunt of colonial exploitation. This connection between past ills and present perceptions ensures that states and international politics cannot outrun their colonial histories. This assertion parallels other accounts of inequality in the postcolonial international system. For example, Antony Anghie argues that the West deliberately entrenched neocolonial economic relations into international law in response to decolonization.⁵⁵ Others like Siba Grovogui highlight how Anglo-European states continue to control institutions of global governance and function to disadvantage postcolonial states.⁵⁶ In these cases, identifying hierarchies is straightforward. One can point to exact moments and cases in international legal jurisprudence when Anglo-Europeans revealed their inclination to curtail the postcolonial world's sovereign equality.

⁵⁵ Anghie 2007.

⁵⁶ Grovogui 1996.

racism, chattel slavery, and colonialism produced "dangerous" modern subjects that Western states—often former colonizers—now routinely restrict. During decolonization, Anglo-European states assumed that recognizing former colonies as sovereign equals would settle the issue of racial inequality. These powerful states ignored the fact that former colonies gained independence after experiencing debilitating periods of domination at the hands of the great powers. Sovereign equality did not erase the long histories of exploitation that led to citizens from postcolonial states appearing inferior, undesirable, or even dangerous when compared to citizens of the Anglo-European states. Although the international system is now legally color-blind, we still observe inequality in migration because racism now hides in this uncritical view of why some migrants appear threatening. And the states that treated those "dangerous" migrants are the same states that now categorize them as inherently unfit to immigrate. In this way, the decline of explicit racism and the rise of color blindness allow race to appear as a settled issue in the politics of migration, while obscuring that simply recognizing postcolonial states as equals does not create equality.

An unfortunate implication of this relationship between colonial exploitation and the ignorance of "color blindness" is that racial inequality in international migration is unlikely to abate *duo* to the expansion of sovereignty in the postcolonial world. The conventional account of decolonization in international relations (IR) is that the European-dominated international society expanded to include former colonies, thereby becoming a global society.⁵⁷ Now that postcolonial states were recognized as equal members of the sovereign state system and its institutions, racial inequality was supposedly resolved. Instead, the globalization of the international society led to further closure and inequality because of the persistent hierarchy that lurks in contemporary global politics. Anglo-Europeans only conditionally accepted postcolonial states as members of the international society after years of exploitation, imposing arbitrary boundaries and, in many cases, disrupting centuries-long norms of freedom of movement.⁵⁸ This conditionality creates the perpetual need for postcolonial states to perform their legitimate statehood because, otherwise, Western states are free to intervene in their affairs.⁵⁴ Strict border controls are one important way of demonstrating authority and

⁵² Bull and Watson 1984, 432.

⁵³ Herbst 2000, 228.