Immigration And National Identity Crisis In France

As quoted by President Barack Obama, “American isn’t just blood or birth but allegiance to our founding principles and faith in the idea that anyone – from anywhere – can write the next chapter.” This line is much related to the issue about immigration and identity crisis in France.

France is in the grips of a very important national debate. Is it about mass unemployment, which has been gripping the country for decades? France is in a debate about French identity. French believes that immigration cause identity crisis and that identity crisis falls into rumbling of national identity arguments for so many years.

To deeply understand the problem, we have to first clearly define and understand what is immigration and identity crisis. Immigration is the international movement of people to a destination country of which they are not natives or where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens, or to take up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker. People who immigrate are called immigrants. Some are illegal immigrants. Some immigrants are refugees and some ask for political asylum while identity crisis is a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in their expected aims or role in society.

Talking about immigration and identity crisis is important since it becomes part of different country especially in France. This thing brought a big impact in the life of many French and to the society both positive and negative.

There is nothing wrong in the Immigration in France: Identity Crisis is not a product of immigration because being French isn’t a competition. However, French should be responsible enough for uplifting their national identity and be contented for any type of opportunity instead of keeping hatred and setting too much high standard for themselves.

At a time of economic malaise, of seemingly sliding international prestige, of globalization, and an ongoing wave of terrorism and immigration, what exactly does it mean to be French? This narrow debate points to a much bigger one: What does it mean to be French? Is it about ideas? Is it about ancestry? Is it about land? Is it about language? Is it about culture?

Once you start defining French identity as something more than an idea, you start going into unhealthy territory, grasping for other identifiers like descent, blood, even skin color.

France economic and social problems persist because of an inability to reach a consensus, partly because they all have a different idea about French identity. Before it can get its house in order, France will have to figure out who and what it is.

Today, almost all the French political class hammers secularism as one of the key French values. But for 1,500 years, to be French meant to be Catholic, to pledge allegiance to the king, and to be consecrated to the immaculate heart of Mary. If French identity has changed radically over the centuries, the implication seems to be that the Frenchmen of the past weren't really

French. (Astier, 2004)

In addition to social opinions and cultural differences, worsened economic conditions are a primary cause of dispute over immigration. The French economy then stabilized, and did not develop as rapidly as it did prior to the downturn. While in the past a steadily growing labor force was needed from migrants to supplement that of the natives within the country, this slowdown logically meant that employers have needed fewer external, foreign workers and stopped recruiting them for the most part, focusing more on the available pool of labor within the country. Socioeconomic restructuring has also contributed to this. One example of this is that education and labor market experience from overseas are often significantly less valued than human resources gained within the country. On the contrary, the rate of incoming migrant workers has not necessarily decreased accordingly. Consequently, there is increased tension between settled immigrants and natives over employment, most markedly on the lower levels of the economy where immigrants and their children have composed noticeably larger proportions of the workforce. Many natives feel that it is difficult to find a job competing with immigrants, and this is a major part of the debate against the latter. Younger immigrants in France are further embittered and more aggressive against the natives economically because their joblessness has stood even higher historically and because they usually occupy poor areas that wealthier people have left. Furthermore, immigrants tend to start more independent businesses than natives, attributed to their willingness to take more risks in the relatively uphill journey to create a firm grip in the economy and community. Although this creation of new businesses has the long-term potential to generate more jobs including for the natives, it leads to much increased commercial and industrial competition between immigrants and natives. Thus, France’s native citizens would lose profit and would fall behind financially.

There also are major concerns that the economic benefits, such as extra labor and tax income, that the immigrants by themselves may provide do not offset the costs of accommodating them in France. For instance, many officials believe that the cost of public housing for immigrants is too expensive especially when considering the large numbers of unauthorized immigrants residing as well. Civic services such as welfare, police and fire protection, although they are rudimentary for all people, have been suffering from the increased expenses caused by the increased population on the part of the immigrants and their children.

Immigrants have also been given a degree of affirmative action concerning housing and the like from the French government in order to integrate them into French society faster. However, in addition to the cultural resentment against foreigners and their relatives, there is a strong sense in French society stemming from the French Revolution that every person should be treated equally. Native French citizens are therefore angered that the immigrants are allowed favors and privileges apparently unfair to them. As a result of these distinct viewpoints on national society and cultural differences and fears, many natives are turning against immigration, believing it to be a harmful force to them.

Mainly, the integration of diverse people in nations that have existed over many centuries is problematic on the grounds that immigrants are not the foundation. There are deeper cultural and national identity issues at stake. Consequently, this has caused nations like France to encounter domestic problems with immigrant populations. The cultural and social issues that are developed from immigrant populations also have economic implications. As we live in a much more globalized world, the way that nations utilize people and resources is essential in creating a more prosperous world. While Germany has done a better job at addressing the

social, political and economic challenges of immigration than France, both nations can benefit from adopting the United States' tendency to adapt to a globalized world where immigrants play an important role.

France's political climate is historically divisive and not conducive to immigrant reforms. France has a long track record of political protest and a culture of endorsed activism against the ruling regime. Frequent demonstrations against the government for a wide variety of issues have been indicative of the social instability of the French nation. A recent example of such demonstrations is the proposed gay marriage bill which was promised by the president in the most recent election. Such protests are part of France's national identity and show that reforms are costly social endeavors.

For immigrants, this means that any proposed changes or challenges to the status quo are going to be met with hostility and protest. Given that immigrants are already subject to nativist people, the case is much more severe in France. Ultimately, however, it is the political tradition and cultural affinity for protest that fosters this.

Inefficient government reforms and a lackluster educational system have been political issues in France that resulted in repercussions for immigrants. France's educational system is not up to par as being a "high-tech post-industrial society."

The education based reforms that are oriented towards including the immigrant population have not come to fruition. Consequently, Muslim dropouts who do not add value to the economic well-being of the nation are scapegoated as being a waste of national resources. While this could be interpreted as a cultural or economic issue, the underlying cause of the problem is the mismanagement of educational reform when it comes to immigrants. If immigrants are not being given adequate opportunities to attend school and follow through with higher education, then social problems will naturally occur.

France's immigrant population has also experienced a tremendous amount of economic exclusion. Similar to the United States, native citizens are apprehensive when it comes to losing jobs to immigrants who work for less pay. Coupled with the fact that there was a major influx of immigrants from Africa after 1970, there are serious concerns in terms of how they are going to get jobs. If immigrants are unable to get jobs, then there is a possibility of other means of getting by, such as crime, corruption, social welfare and vagrancy. (Schain, 2008)

Clearly, economic exclusion is problematic for immigrants because they resort to alternative means of survival when faced with no other option. Furthermore, this economic exclusion has been further exemplified by the fact that even with Arabs who have college degrees, many still cannot find work.

Lastly, and most importantly, France's immigrants face a serious burden in terms of dealing with the French people's cultural tendencies to discriminate and oppress others.

The immigration and identity crisis is always debatable for the two sides have their own stand for the situations but rather than the rights to be identify as the real French, humanity should always be look forward for this problems. After all, it is not about being French, it is not about what you speak, what color you have or who is your ancestors, it's a matter of being human who all deserves an equal respect and opportunity to live.

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