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BOOK REVIEW

Recto running head : ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES

Verso running head : BOOK REVIEW

 Erica Consterdine

Lancaster University Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

 e.consterdine@lancaster.ac.uk

Immigration, Security, and the Liberal State: The Politics of Migration Regulation in Europe and the United States, by Gallya Lahav and Anthony Messina, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 2006, viii+472pp., £34.99 (paperback), ISBN: 9781009297998

History :

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If the last two decades of the politics of immigration tell us anything, it is that liberal states struggle with the contradictory demands of migration; caught between the post-national rights and capitalist demands for openness, and political demands for closure. The question of the capacity of states to reconcile these paradoxical imperatives is the subject of *Immigration, Security and the Liberal State*, and the answer Lahav and Messina argue is security framings. Drawing on an impressive multi-method design across a range of countries the book offers a methodical take on how the rights-based and economic frames that dominated the post-war period have been superseded by security frames that legitimise policies that undermine the civil liberties of both migrants and citizens.

Reflective of the authors' decades of research expertise, the multi-method design draws on longitudinal and cross-national public opinion surveys, media content and framing analysis, demographic data, policy analysis and comparative case studies in the US, UK, and Spain. Lahav and Messina synthesize these data sources to construct the "immigration threat politics paradigm" which delineates the effects of public safety and national security threat frames on issue salience, popular attitudes, party politics and immigration policy outcomes.

Drawing on political psychology and critical security studies, Lahav and Messina argue that political elites and the publics mutually shape the parameters of policy choice. They set out a chain of causation in their model wherein how the media and political elites frame an objective security event such as 9/11 determines whether and to which degree they are salient for citizens. Once these issues become highly salient and/or politicised they are then "filtered through a prism of interactive attitudinal influences, including an individual's ideological and/or partisan orientation, dominant norms, values, and emotions" (19) which then lead to support for general policy preferences. These public preferences inform how mainstream parties and elites discuss the issue and, when in government, formulate and adopt policies. Therefore, according to Lahav and Messina, political elites and publics interactively establish the parameters of policy choice.

The book is organised by the sequence of the threat politics paradigm by considering the effect of threat frames in shaping the trajectory of policy outcomes. Chapter 2 considers how different frames have shaped immigration politics and policy in Europe and the US, concluding that the way immigration is framed determines whether the subject is highly salient. As public safety aspects of immigration have become more salient, liberal states have in turn adopted increasingly restrictive

policies. Chapter 3 is an incredible feat, providing a comprehensive mapping of the wide array of actors and institutions that have been coopted and delegated to enforce immigration and border controls, dubbed the “migration policy playing field”. This exercise serves to demonstrate the strategies that liberal states have adopted to navigate the migration trilemma but incidentally provides scholars with a fruitful map of the wide array of implementing actors. Utilising public opinion data, chapter 4 shows that the public endorses these developments even when in the process basic civil liberties of citizens and migrants are contravened. Given this infringement, chapter 5 seeks to examine why publics accept these policies where Lahav and Messina argue that media and political elite framings of security events such as 9/11 make immigration salient and conflate immigration with public safety in the public's thinking. Consequently, elites are freer than previously to maintain restrictive policies even when they abrogate civil liberties. Moreover, a path-dependent effect combined with the discourse of the centre right and far right makes this discourse sustainable and therefore these policies are difficult to revoke even when public attitudes soften. The book turns to three case studies – Spain, UK, and the US – next to test the immigration threat politics paradigm, showing the pattern of party-political competition before and after 9/11. The concluding chapter summarises the findings and reflects on the normative implications of the migration policy playing field; that is, whether the devolution to non-state actors is legitimate or compatible with the core values of the liberal state.

This is a book ~~then~~ about how immigration has become politicised and securitised in Europe and the US since the end of the Cold War, illuminating the trade-offs between the demands of economy, civil liberties, honouring humanitarian commitments and providing national security, raising critical questions about the implications of this for the governance of human mobility and the future of the liberal order. Aside from being impressively comprehensive ~~ly and richly~~ researched, this monograph provides several significant contributions. Firstly, the politics threat paradigm model will provide limitless avenues for future research applications in other research contexts. Secondly, Lahav and Messina make a persuasive case for challenging perspectives that privilege economic and/or cultural explanations in explaining the development of contemporary ~~politics of~~ immigration ~~governance~~, conversely arguing that liberal states exercise considerable control over immigration and human mobility. This argument is especially compelling in their elaboration of how the outsourcing of migration controls is a response to the migration trilemma, ~~conversely~~ demonstrating that liberal states enjoy greater decision-making freedom and that the imperatives of security, and the practice of outsourcing are co-constitutive. Finally, Lahav and Messina probe the critical and overlooked question in the politics of immigration – why public tolerate the contravention of their civil liberties in exchange for border security.

Scholars seeking a historically situated theory of why security threats have dominated liberal states may be left wanting, and those who adopt critical neo-colonial understandings of security might not be persuaded. But *Immigration, Security and Liberal State* will be a staple for scholars in the politics of migration and should be required reading for students. The book provides students the answers to how security frames have ~~reflect~~ ~~inform~~ immigration governance in often unanticipated ways, and illuminates how security frames have shaped, and are shaped by, an array of actors in the migration policy playing field. It should be the first port of call for any scholar new to the politics of migration, and for the seasoned; it provides a constructive challenge to debates and assertions of dwindling state power. It raises critical questions for our conventional understandings of immigration governance in this security age, it pulls together an array of theories and governance examples that will inspire further research, and it moves the critical debates in the sub-discipline forward, building a theory that is more apt for the security age ~~and~~; leaving no rock unturned empirically in this pursuit. This book is a timely contribution when security imperatives and populist politics dominate the liberal state.