

A Brief Analysis of the Social Problems Caused by the Dilemma of French Immigrants and Their Causes

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Abstract

Immigration has always been an unavoidable problem in France. Throughout the history of French immigrants, immigrants have not only solved the problem of French labor shortage, but also contributed to the social development of France. With the increase of Muslim immigrants, many social problems have gradually emerged, increasing the financial burden of France, worsening social security, threatening national security and intensifying social tearing. Immigrants are difficult to integrate into French society, and most of them are faced with the plight of low living standards, lack of room for rise and lack of political channels, which need to be treated reasonably and solved correctly by the French government.

Keywords

France; Immigrants; Dilemma; Causes.

1. Introduction

In recent years, immigrant groups have caused a series of problems in France, whether economically, socially or culturally, it is difficult for immigrants to integrate into French society. In particular, the second-generation immigrants are experiencing identity dilemmas. Born in France or came to France from an early age, they were nurtured by French traditional cultural values at school and recognized their French citizenship; as soon as they got home, they had to follow the older generation and live according to another concept of values, religious beliefs and traditional culture. This cultural identity is assimilated in blood and cannot be separated. The separation of immigrant citizenship and cultural identity has widened the gap between "us" and "them" between immigrants and French natives. On the one hand, they recognize their French identity, but they are angry that it is not accepted by the local residents; on the other hand, their cultural identity has angered the French residents who adhere to the policy of "assimilation". It is regarded as a provocation to the values of the Republic, deepening the contradiction between immigrants and local residents.

2. Immigrants in France

2.1. History of Immigration

Compared with other countries in the Europe, France can be regarded as a country of immigrants. in order to deal with the problem of labor shortage, France began to import immigrants from other countries a long time ago.

As early as the end of the 19th century, France accepted immigrants from neighboring Belgium and Switzerland. As these people belong to the French cultural zone and believe in Catholicism, they have a great cultural and linguistic agreement with the French local residents, these immigrants have successfully integrated into French society.

During the two world wars, immigrants from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Poland poured into France in large numbers to avoid the war. Most of them lived together and formed immigrant communities in many French cities. Although these immigrants occasionally clashed with French natives due to religious and cultural differences, the French government carried out a policy of "cultural assimilation", which forced immigrants to identify with the values of the Republic and to recognize themselves as members of the French cultural community with French as the only language. Those measures have successfully erased the cultural imprint of the home country from the second generation of immigrants.

After World War II, Islamic immigrants from the former French colonies of North Africa and West Africa constituted the third wave of immigrants, which was the largest in number, lasted longer and had the most serious impact on French society. In the 21 century, a large number of refugees from Eastern Europe and the Middle East poured into Europe, these refugees also had strong Islamic beliefs, the two groups of forces merged, and the Muslim group became the largest immigrant group in France. The "multiculturalism" advocated by Western society also allows these immigrants to retain their religious beliefs and traditional cultures. There have been disputes between Christian civilization and Muslim civilization in history, and the frequent international terrorist attacks make the antagonism between them irreconcilable. The conflict between stereotyped immigrants and French society is becoming more and more acute, giving rise to a series of economic, social and cultural problems.

2.2. Immigrants' Status

According to INSEE (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies), by 2020, the French immigrant population has reached 6.8 million, accounting for 10.2% of the country's total population, of which 47.5% are from Africa and 32.2% are from Europe. In addition, there are 7.6 million descendants of immigrants born in France, accounting for 11.4 per cent of the total population. Immigrants and descendants of immigrants, a large group, are lagging behind French natives in terms of economic, education, employment and other social resources.

Table 1. Immigrant population in France

	1921	1946	1954	1962	1975	1982	1990	2006	2011	2021
Immigrants (million)	1.4	2.0	2.3	2.8	3.8	4.1	4.2	5.1	5.6	6.8
Proportion	3.7%	4.9%	5.4%	6.2%	7.4%	7.4%	7.3%	8.1%	8.6%	10.2%

Table 2. Country of origin

Algeria	Morocco	Portugal	Tunisia	Italy	Turkey	Spain
12.7%	12%	8.6%	4.5%	4.1%	3.6%	3.5%

3. Influences of immigrants

3.1. The Positive Effect of Immigrants

Immigration has had a positive impact on France.

First of all, they solved the problem of labor shortage in France and made great contributions to the economic development of France. Especially in labor-intensive industries with low technical content but hard work, such as construction, mining, metallurgy, textile and other fields, a large number of migrant workers were employed to complete the work. After World War II, with the hard work of immigrants, the social reconstruction of France was carried out smoothly and the economy took off rapidly, thus providing economic support for the French social assurance system.

Secondly, it promotes the growth of French population and slows down the aging process of French society. Immigrants usually have a stronger desire to have children than French aborigines, driving up the fertility rate in France. The results of the INSEE 2015 annual census show that native French women have an average of 1.88 children, while immigrant women have an average of 2.75 children. The average fertility rate of immigrant women in the three North African countries is far ahead. Immigrants play an important role in France's ability to maintain a fertility rate of about 2 per capita for women.

Thirdly, immigration has enhanced France's cultural competitiveness. Whether in the fields of literature, art, science, sports, or politics, a large number of talents of immigrant origin have emerged, making French culture the brightest pearl in the crown. For example, Madame Curie, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics and Chemistry, is originally from Poland; the writer Kundera is originally from the Czech Republic; the footballer Zidane is of Algerian descent; and even former French President Nicolas Sarkozy is a descendant of European immigrants. More than half of the most popular public figures in France are immigrants or descendants of immigrants.

3.2. Social Problems Caused by Immigrants

However, immigration is at the root of a series of problems in France today. Since the 1970s, due to the influence of the oil crisis, France's development slowed down and gradually entered a period of economic recession. France's financial situation was unable to support the acceptance and resettlement of immigrants, and a series of social problems caused by immigrants began to prominent. As the French economy slows or even stagnates and the number of immigrants in France continues to grow, those problems become more and more acute.

3.2.1. Increase the Burden on the French Economy

During the period of French economic development, a complete social assurance system was established. Once you become a Frenchman, you can enjoy social welfare, which is based on the high taxes paid by all citizens.

Due to the lack of resources in the home country, most of the new immigrants must face language barriers, low education, lack of professional skills and other problems. It makes it far more difficult for them to obtain employment than non-immigrant groups, either unemployed or engaged in low-end manual work with limited income. In order to rehouse these immigrants, the government needs to pay a lot of manpower, material resources and other public resources, which will naturally not cause too much anxiety when the government is financially affluent. With the decline of the French economy, the shrinking French government has begun to concentrate welfare resources on low-income people, of which immigration is a major part. Coupled with the de-industrialized industrial restructuring implemented in France in recent years, a large number of workers working in the former old industrial base are forced to lose their jobs and rely on social welfare for a living, of which the proportion of immigrants is much higher than that of non-immigrants. In addition, the fertility rate of immigrant women, which is much higher than the French average, also allows them to enjoy more childcare subsidies.

Table 3. Per capita welfare benefits in 2018 (euro)

	welfare	pension	unemployment relief	income	tax
French	1550	5950	760	18580	4470
Non-immigrants	1470	6140	750	19000	4600
Immigrants	2380	4040	860	14520	3200
African immigrants	3130	2420	1020	11720	2070
European immigrants	1360	7140	680	16820	4500

According to INSEE, in 2018, compared with non-immigrants, immigrants received 61.9% more social benefits and 14.7% more unemployment benefits, but paid 31.4% less tax, and the gap between African-American immigrants and non-immigrants was even greater.

In view of the fact that the contribution of immigrants to society is far lower than the economic cost that the government has to pay, it is naturally regarded by some xenophobic French as a burden on French finance and that immigrants seize the resources of French native residents.

3.2.2. Worsen the Public Order and Threaten the National Security

By the second quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate in France reached 8%, among which the unemployment rate of immigrants and their offspring was even higher. The disparity between the rich and the poor in French society has widened, the growth of the Gini coefficient has aggravated social instability, and the deterioration of public security in France has been carried out almost at the same time as lowering the threshold of immigration.

Immigrants are generally gathered in the suburbs to form immigrant communities, where infrastructure is poor, government investment is inadequate, public management is chaotic, daily life revolves around a special "immigrant culture". Most of the riots that spread across the country were originated in this area. A large number of immigrant offspring are poorly educated, leave school early and are not recognized by the French mainstream society. Due to the lack of family education and school education, they have not formed a correct outlook on life, and they are unable to change and achieve self-improvement. Do nothing, wander around, hate society, steal, rob or even sell drugs for profit. Local residents' discrimination against crime has intensified their dissatisfaction with society. Meanwhile, French law does not attach importance to misdemeanors such as theft, and the public security management of the police is limited, as a result, the cost of crime is low, which in disguise encourages the atmosphere of crime. Immigrant communities with high poverty rates have become hotbeds of crime, with about 70% of prisoners in French prisons being Muslim immigrants.

What's more, due to the closed loop of information, these prisoners' thinking in prison is further extreme, and even some people vent their discontent and violence through social platforms after they are released, and are bewitched by terrorists to carry out terrorist attacks in France. In recent years, successive terrorist attacks in France have shown that France has even been the primary target of terrorist attacks. The escalation of the threat of international terrorism has made French society suffer from "Islamophobia", which has strengthened the public's negative impression of immigrant groups.

3.2.3. Intensify Ethnic Antagonism and Tear Society Apart

For immigrants, France has traditionally pursued an "assimilation policy", either assimilating or leaving. All french citizens are required to unite under the values of the Republic nurtured by French culture, to use French as the only official language, and to renounce the cultural and religious identity of their home country. With the early immigrants came from European countries, the policy was very successful in strengthening the homogeneity within the country and establishing the identity of the French citizen community. When immigrants from Africa and the Middle East becoming the largest immigrant group in France, this "assimilation policy" is no longer as effective as it used to be. Although these immigrants come from different countries and regions, they share the same Islamic belief, which in history is in total contradiction with the traditional French Catholicism. The same beliefs and cultural traditions constitute the common characteristics of the internal members of Muslim immigrants; similar treatment and living standards make them trust, understand and unite with each other, and psychologically regard the immigrant groups as "their own" and fight for survival resources together, while the native French residents are regarded as "others".

The unity within the immigrant group makes their external group identity more prominent. The strengthening of external differences stimulated France's vigilance to the

religious culture of immigrants and began to question the immigrants' identity and loyalty to France. The difference between the self-identity cognition of immigrants and the identity cognition of French local society makes the boundary between immigrants and French local residents more and more clear. The new round of international terrorist attacks has strengthened people's impression of the confrontation between "native civilization" and "immigrant civilization". Coupled with the promotion of the media, the social ripping within the country is a direct consequence.

4. Dilemme of Immigrants

4.1. Poor Living Conditions

According to INSEE, the annual living standard of French immigrant families was 20040 euros in 2018, or 1670 euros per month. Social welfare accounts for an even larger proportion of the living standards of immigrants: 11.9%, compared with 5.9% of non-immigrants.

Table 4. Per capita income level in 2018

	Living standard (euro)	Population (%)	Poverty rate(%)
French	24650	100	14.8
Non-immigrants	15120	90.8	13.2
Immigrants	20040	9.2	30.7
African immigrants	16910	4.2	39.5
European immigrants	23820	3.2	17.6

Overall, before welfare and taxes are paid, the average living standard of immigrants is 26% lower than that of non-immigrants. After redistribution, the gap narrowed: their average standard of living was 20% lower than that of non-immigrants, or 423 euros a month. Immigrants from Africa have the lowest average standard of living: 16910 euros per year, or 1409 euros per month. It is 29% lower than European immigrants and 33% lower than non-immigrants.

Part of the reason for the low average living standard of immigrants is that the working income is 24% lower on average. This is due to structural factors: immigrants are younger, less educated, work in less qualified jobs, and they are more likely to lose their jobs. As a result, immigrants are more likely to fall into poverty: their poverty rate is 30.7 per cent, 17.5 percentage points higher than that of non-immigrants. Among the immigrant population, the poverty rate of people of African descent (39.5%) is more than double that of people of European descent (17.6%).

4.2. Lack of Room for Improvement

As most of the first-generation immigrants must face the language barriers, their illiteracy rate is high and they do not have the economic ability to break away from suburban life. Subjectively, due to the limitation of their own education, except for Asians, most immigrants do not pay enough attention to education. Therefore, compared with non-immigrants, immigrant teenagers generally have higher dropout rate, lower enrollment rate and lower education level. Objectively, the immigrant community is the victim of the uneven distribution of resources in France, neither living conditions, health care nor educational resources can be compared with mainstream neighborhoods. Especially the educational resources which are vital to personal development, are inadequate, and the teachers of schools in the neighborhoods gathered by immigrants are generally weak. The nearby admission principle implemented in

France makes it impossible for immigrants to have high-quality educational resources. Then, unable to continue to receive higher education after the stage of basic education.

The low level of education limits the room for the rise of immigrant teenagers, who are not highly educated and lack technical skills, and they lack competitiveness in the job market. In order to make ends meet, they can only repeat the same mistakes as their parents. Engaged in low-end informal service-oriented industries. The working income of these service industries is low and unstable, and the risk of poverty is much higher than the national average. On the other hand, the immigrant community is lack of social resources, and these immigrants have no channel to receive employment training provided by the state or enterprises, and there is no hope of self-improvement in their careers. Even if the descendants of immigrants complete higher education by their own efforts, in the employment market, they still do not have any advantage in competition with non-immigrants with the same educational level.

4.3. Lack of Political Appeal Channels

Most of the immigrants live in immigrant communities in the suburbs, which are highly closed and have little contact with French natives. In particular, the largest proportion of Muslim immigrants are almost completely "isolated" from French mainstream society, which means their social, economic, educational and other resources are deprived. This kind of "isolation" is not only the active choice of immigrants, but also the result of their exclusion by local residents. This "isolation" and immigrants' difficulty in integrating into society have formed a cycle of evil deeds. Living in a so closed community for a long time, immigrants are trapped in the information cocoon room, where is full of voices of dissatisfaction, they are easily brainwashed by negative emotions.

Immigrants, who came to France from the beginning as a supplement to the labor force, have long been regarded as "labor tools" by the arrogant French natives. The French take discrimination against immigrants for granted, and they are called insulting by the French, whether they are Belgian, Polish or African. Under the influence of this mentality, it is very difficult for immigrants to be treated equally by French residents outside the immigrant community, and even more difficult to enjoy the basic rights of French citizens. At the same time, due to the limitations of economic income, education level and participation ability, French immigrant groups lack the ability of negotiation, communication and self-expression, so they can not participate in public affairs subjectively. This makes immigrants feel more marginalized.

Although French law allows immigrant communities to retain their own national culture and traditions, it strictly limits the political function of immigrant societies, so that immigrants have no channels to express their political aspirations. France has a large immigrant group, but it does not have a political party that represents the interests of immigrants to speak for it. On the contrary, it has long faced the "exclusion" of immigrants by far-right political parties and the media. They have to exert pressure on the government through demonstrations or creating unexpected incidents. But it poses a threat to French social stability and national security.

5. Conclusion

The proportion of immigrants in the French population is increasing year by year, and the social problems caused are not only caused by endogenous contradictions but also affected by external factors. Immigrants are difficult to integrate into French society, in essence, because of the contradiction between their identity and cultural identity. It is difficult for the torn society to make up for the trauma, so it is urgent to solve the problem of immigration. French immigration policy must strike a balance between "assimilation" and "multiculturalism".

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