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Britain as a Country of Migration

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Abstract

The arrival of migrants in various European countries during the twentieth century led to inevitable changes and transformations in the social structures of the countries. In particular, Europe after the Second World War faced huge waves of migration. It is a migration model called colonial migration model that gives priority to migrants from colonies in migration acceptance, especially in the United Kingdom. There are many migrants in the UK that have migrated from the Commonwealth of Nations. The post-colonial era significantly increased migration from colonial countries to Britain, and migrants were subordinated to a secondary position in the multicultural British society despite of the arrangements. In this context, this article focuses on discussing the inequalities that migration creates in multicultural British society.

Key words: Britain, Postcolonial, Migrant, Secondary, Multicultural.

Bir Göç Ülkesi Olarak Britanya

Öz

Yirminci yüzyıl boyunca çeşitli Avrupa ülkelerine göçmenlerin gelmesi ülkelerin toplumsal yapılarında kaçınılmaz değişikliklere ve dönüşümlere yol açmıştır. Özellikle, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası Avrupa büyük göç dalgalarıyla karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Sömürgeci göç modeli diye adlandırılan ve başta Birleşik Krallık olmak üzere göçmen kabulünde sömürgelerden gelen göçmenlere öncelik tanıyan göç modelidir. Britanya’da bu biçimde Yeni İngiliz Uluslar Topluluğu’ndan göç etmiş birçok göçmen vardır. Sömürgecilik sonrası dönem belirgin ölçüde koloni ülkelerden Britanya’ya göçü artırmıştır ve göçmenler çok kültürlü Britanya toplumunda düzenlemelere rağmen ikincil bir konuma maruz kalmıştır. Bu bağlamda bu makale göçün çok kültürlü İngiliz toplumunda yarattığı eşitsizlikleri tartışmaya odaklanır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Britanya, Sömürgecilik Sonrası, Göçmen, İkincil, Çok Kültürlü.

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Introduction

As a global concept, migration contains a wide range of contents and has been the field of interest in versatile disciplines like economics, statistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, geography and cultural studies¹. In the earlier periods of humanity, human circulation was more restricted but in the later periods the social dynamics and life conditions became more complicated and it affected human circulation and mobility. In this sense “migration is the physical transition of an individual or a group from one society to another. This transition involves abandoning from one social setting and entering another and different one”² in simple terms. On the other hand it is also defined as “a shift of certain number of undifferentiated persons from one place to another, but also a change in the occupational and population structure of both countries or regions”³. Due to mobility of people, the masses who migrated to different regions for various social and economic reasons began to influence these regions by directing the social and economic situation of the regions they migrated to. This influence has changed human life in the region positively or negatively in different aspects such as health, physical environment, behavior, and political consciousness besides social and economical ones⁴.

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century the growing industry, the creation of new resources, increasing international job opportunities, political organizations and social changes have forced people to leave their homeland and to seek new living spaces all over the world including United Kingdom. In this process, United Kingdom became one of the important countries that accepted the migrants coming from the colonies. The core of the problem was very related with the fact that people who migrated from underdeveloped regions or countries to more developed ones became the source of various social, cultural, economic, political, health and environmental problems there due to their different cultural backgrounds⁵. It's clear that's a great mobility indeed. According to Wilbur Zelinsky the concept emphasizes the change in the place where one resides and, on the other hand, covers all kinds of mobility⁶.

The Dilemma of Migration in Britain

The arrival of migrants in different European countries during the twentieth century caused a kind of transformation in social structures of these countries due to their position as a migrant. Europe after the Second World War faced huge waves of migration. In particular, Britain became a country of migrants more and more. After this period lots of people came from ancient colonies to Britain. On the other hand, many people migrated into countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and Sweden because of the needs of these countries. The developments in Germany at the end of the 1980s and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 face Europeans with a process called 'new migration'. Resolutions in Eastern Bloc countries, the

¹ Caroline Brettell, James Frank Hollifield, *Migration Theory: Talking Across Discipline*, Psychology Press, New York 2000, p.4-6.

² J. J. Mangalam, *Human Migration: A Guide to Migration Literature in English 1955—1962*, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington 1968, p. 7.

³ Ibid, p. 8.

⁴ Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 5.

⁵ Dr. V.N.P. Sinha & Dr. Md. Ataulah; *Migration An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Seema Publications, Delhi 1987, p. 1-2.

⁶ Colin G. Pooley, Jean Turnbull; *Migration and Mobility in Britain since the Eighteenth Century*, ICL Press, Oxon 1998, p. 178.

disintegration of the Soviet Union, the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in the Balkan, change of some regimes and some country borders in Central Europe created a suitable atmosphere for migration. Thus, well-established countries like United Kingdom have become destination countries more and more in terms of migration⁷

It is certain that Britain is among the leading countries affected by migration in Europe in the twentieth century. However, migration to Britain is not limited to the twentieth century, but chronologically goes back to the early stages of history. While the first migrations began to flow from the coastal areas of the British islands to central cities, the later ones included the migrants' mobility from the colonial lands under the dominion of United Kingdom. In addition, another reason for the acceleration of migration waves in Britain is the presentation of the Industrial Revolution. In this period, opportunities created by the industrial revolution attracted people of various nations and sects. For example, an important wave of migration happened with the arrival of Jews who fled Nazi persecution in the 1930s to Britain, and this was further increased with the refugees added later in 1933-1939 and in 1945. Especially after the Second World War, the nature of migration to Britain has changed and the majority of migrants coming to the country started to flow from the Commonwealth countries. One of the most important reasons for this situation is the British Nationality Act, adopted in 1948. The political structure of the era, which believed that Britain was a great imperial legacy, regarded migrants from Pakistan, India and African colonies as if they were British citizens and gave them the right to settle in Britain easily. But later, British migrant politics began to change and migrants' demands for residence and citizenship became unacceptable. In the 1960s migration brought about the emergence of racist attitudes in Great Britain. For example, the 1962 Constitution was full of restrictive obstacles for non-whites to enter the country. As a result of the migration in this long process, racism in the country increased⁸

Further, in the 1968 constitution, birth in Britain was limited to binding substances such as adoption, and privileged actions were taken for migrants from former members of the community, such as Canada and Australia, than black migrants from the Commonwealth. The migration law of 1971 restricted the entry of migrants from the New British Commonwealth countries to Britain and allowed entry to the country, whether it be a citizen or not. By the 1980s, it was much more difficult to accept migrants from countries that formerly belonged to the UK. Additionally, the restrictive restrictions on entry and residence permits were further intensified by the laws in 1988 and 1996. The racist attitude of the politics applied to migrants was most concentrated during the Conservative Party periods under Margareth Thatcher⁹. The presence of the migrant population was decisive in shaping the ethnic appearance of Britain. It is due to the fact that the presence of Britain and other European nations in the colonies gradually begins to decline with the end of World War II, and colonies began to unravel and post-colonial migration landscapes began to emerge after the ruling countries opened their doors to migrants since the 1950s and 1960s. The element that triggered these migrations was labor migration, and this feature has become permanent rather than a temporary situation due to the growing growth of the modern global economy¹⁰.

According to Ravenstein migration was directly related with theory of push and pull process. He talks about the adverse conditions in one place push people out, and advantageous conditions in another place pull them in. For him, "push factors are usually negative and include conflict, political instability and social inequality. Pull factors, those attract people to

⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Sosyoloji*, Hzr. Cemal Güzel, Ayraç Yayınevi, Ankara 2005, s. 258.

⁸ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2006, p. 500-503.

⁹ David Mason, *Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain*, Oxford University Press, New York 1995, p. 25-30.

¹⁰ Steve Fenton, *Etnisite*, çev. Nihad Şad, Phonix Yayınevi, Ankara 1999, s. 223-225.

a particular receiving country, include employment possibilities, and freer communities in the country of destination”¹¹.

Conclusion

As a result, the migrant population was an important factor in the ethnic appearance of Britain in postcolonial period. In the 1960s, migrants were employed in jobs that require more physical strength whereas they started to work in more qualified businesses by the 1970s. But few of them managed to come to the management authorities despite of the improvements. In the 1980s, the general economic recession affected minorities the most. Among them, some ethnic minorities who spoke English fluently were rarely able to work properly. However, adverse conditions in the context of wage distribution, hiring and unemployment among ethnic minorities were in a dimension to cause separation and imbalance. When it comes to income level, it is considered that South Asians have been the most successful ones among the non-white population working as self-employed for a long time¹². On the other hand, after World War II, migrants from countries such as Ireland, Italy and Poland came to Britain, as well as migrants from places such as Jamaica, the Caribbean, Barbados Island, which were colonial countries in the 1950s. On the other hand, migrants from India and Pakistan overshadowed the others in the 1950s¹³.

Lastly, it is clear that human migration is a very old phenomenon and controlled by a push-pull process. On the other hand migration, cultural dovetail, and change have generally become the dominant factors in the transformation of the societies both in Britain and the other parts of Europe. It can be said that migrant life is traumatic and secondary in the multicultural British community, and even some sort of class difference is formed by undergoing divisions within itself. Additionally, despite of discrimination it can be deduced that migrants have had a great role in the evolution of Britain for a long period including the eighteenth century, nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century¹⁴. Thus, multiculturalism became popular, and the country moved away from monoculture by the influence of migration by the end of the 1980s.

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¹¹ Alice Bloch, *The Migration and Settlement of Refugees in Britain*, Palgrave Mcmillan, New York 2002, p.65.

¹² Robin Cohen, Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Migration*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Massachusetts 1997, p. 119-122.

¹³ Ibid, Fenton, p. 225.

¹⁴ Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800*, Routledge, London 2014, p. 259.

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