Building Walls, Bounding Nations: Migration and Exclusion in Canada and Germany, 1870–1939

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Abstract Transformations in global capitalism increased rates of international migration at the turn of the twentieth century, a period also marked by the widespread popularity of scientific racism, integral nationalism, and vaunted notions of state sovereignty. This paper considers how the intersection of these factors influenced migration and citizenship policymaking in Canada and Germany. In both cases, migration was harnessed to further economic objectives while groups deemed a threat to national integration because of their putative racial or ethno-national characteristics were excluded. The resultant policies would come to define Canada and Germany’s approaches to the migration-membership dilemma for the much of the twentieth century.

Canada and Germany emerged as independent states in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Despite differences in geography, historical development, and regime type, similarities in the two states’ approaches to the regulation of mass migration in this era of unprecedented globalization are striking. Whereas migration was seized upon to meet the needs of rapidly expanding industrial and commercial agricultural sectors, restrictions aimed at guarding the nation against the “invasion” of “non-preferred” groups were also conceived, debated, and ultimately enacted. Globalization catalyzed a “double movement,” facilitating the expansion of transnational migration on a hitherto unsurpassed scale, while also prompting a political response in the form of immigration controls designed to further national integration. In Canada, efforts to keep out “unwanted races” culminated in a complex policy regime based on discriminatory admission and naturalization policies. In Germany, the threat of “Polinization” led to the development of a temporary labor recruitment model, while efforts to exclude foreign Poles and east European Jews from membership drove the formulation of the highly restrictive Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz of 1913. In both countries, solutions to the migration-membership dilemma were entrenched in durable institutions that shaped policymaking in subsequent years. Exclusion based on race and ethnicity reinforced Canada’s identity as a “white man’s country” and Germany’s völkisch nationalism.

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Two macro-structural factors underlay these outcomes: (1) The expansion of international migration as a result of the second industrial revolution and related improvements in transportation technologies, and (2) the concomitant rise of scientific racism and integral nationalism during this period. The expansion of migration compelled both states to formulate new means of regulating migration and membership. Until then, both countries’ policy regimes were rudimentary – inflows of migrants only exceeded outflows in the 1890s. Increased migration pressures forced policymakers in Canada and Germany to develop more elaborate measures. The influence of scientific racism and prevailing notions of nationalism and state sovereignty steered policymakers toward discriminatory policies that explicitly targeted groups deemed “unassimilable” and therefore a threat to national integration. The similarity of outcomes in Canada and Germany problematizes classificatory schemes that draw sharp distinction between “traditional settler countries” like Canada, and “traditional European nation-states” such as Germany. The use of these cases also highlights the influence of broader global forces on domestic politics and policymaking, allowing us to go beyond internalist approaches to immigration and citizenship policy development.

The paper begins with a brief summary of the factors underlying the worldwide expansion of international migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Processes related to global demographic expansion and the “great transformation” unleashed by the second industrial revolution drove increasing rates of transnational migration. Advances in transportation technologies, most importantly the expansion of railroads and improvements in steamships, facilitated the movement of displaced individuals. Improvements in communications technologies and the emergence of a nascent global public sphere provided information to would-be migrants and helped to form links between transnational groups at home and abroad.

The paper goes on to discuss the importance of “scientific racism” for contemporary conceptions of national identity during this era. The ubiquity of race thinking and integral nationalism during the period is striking. In Canada, Germany, and elsewhere elites and the general public shared what would today be considered grossly illiberal views on race, ethnicity, and the hierarchical relation of distinct “peoples” and “nations.” The general acceptability of these ideas across a broad range of groups and classes helped make identity-based exclusions a normal means of regulating international migration. It was not that prevailing notions of race and nationality inevitably led to such exclusions; rather, they provided a palette of ideas that influenced both popular and governmental
thinking about the place of “aliens” and “foreigners” in the body politic. The discrediting of these broadly encompassing ideas catalyzed by the impact of Nazism, World War II, the Holocaust, decolonization, and related shifts in scientific approaches to the “race question” fractured this ideational consensus and helped catalyze demands for non-discriminatory policies in the postwar era.

The two following sections summarize the course of policymaking in Canada and Germany. I explain how domestic economic interests, specifically employers’ demands for unskilled, cheap, and docile labor propelled the entry of immigrants into Canada and Germany. At the same time, negative reactions to the perceived cultural, ethnic, and racial heterogeneity of the newcomers prompted a restrictionist backlash that was reinforced by labor’s antipathy toward immigrant workers. In Canada, the intersection of economic and political/identity concerns gave rise to policies that sought to regulate community through the sifting of “preferred,” “non-preferred,” and “excluded” groups at the point of entry and the selective manipulation of naturalization and citizenship policies. In Germany temporary labor recruitment and a highly restrictive citizenship policy were designed to guard the nation against incursions of “unwanted elements.” Once in place, policies were entrenched in durable regimes that steered subsequent policymaking in a regular pattern.

The paper’s conclusion focuses on the years immediately preceding World War II, a period during which global economic depression, the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, and intense anti-Semitism in Canada and other immigration countries prompted a deadly dynamic that would have terrible consequences for European Jews during the years leading up to and encompassing the war. The Nazis’ devastation of European Jewry marked the horrifying culmination of a trend in modern nation building; though there is no gainsaying the uniqueness of the Holocaust, the fact that most European Jews were effectively shut out of liberal-democratic “immigration countries” 1930s and beyond speaks to the scope of anti-Semitism and racism during the first half of the twentieth century.3 Canada’s particularly horrible record in accepting Jewish refugees fleeing Nazism also highlights the degree to which identity-based restrictions influenced policymaking in the years leading up to the war.

International Migration during the First Wave of Globalization

The years spanning the turn of the twentieth century, that is, from 1870 to the outbreak of World War I, were marked by a rapid surge
in globalization. Vast networks of newly built transcontinental railroads and transoceanic steamship lines enabled goods and people to move on an unprecedented scale with remarkable speed. Improvements in technology, coupled with increased competition among providers, reduced the cost of travel significantly, enabling more people to take advantage of these improvements. As Aristide Zolberg has noted, the growth of the shipping industry helped to catalyze the expansion of emigration as “companies actively promoted their services and recruited passengers, much as was the case earlier with regard to northwestern Europe, but on a commensurately much larger scale.” The Hamburg-America line organized a network of agents in Russia and Eastern Europe from the 1870s onward; these agents played a key part in facilitating the movement of East European Jews to North America, via the German port cities of Bremen and Hamburg.

The emergence of a nascent worldwide communications network based on mass literacy and the proliferation of print media meant that information concerning hitherto far-off and unknown lands would be available to potential migrants. States in search of “suitable” migrants, such as Canada and Australia, provided some of this information through extensive promotional campaigns that included printed literature, slide shows, and speaking tours. Official and unofficial information, such as that provided by friends and relatives who had already emigrated, helped link sending and receiving regions in transnational networks; these, in turn, facilitated further movement.

The combination of steadily declining rates of mortality, improvements in the production and distribution of food, and the radical dislocation of traditional ways of life brought on by the second industrial revolution ensured that there was a large pool of dispossessed laborers willing to migrate in the hope of finding work.

As land became more concentrated and production more specialized . . . farmers found that the traditional system of service based on an annual contract providing housing as well as wages economically burdensome . . . With the shift to short-term work, social ties and shared interests binding landlords to workers were severed, leaving large numbers without housing or sustenance. [As capital moved to urban sites and fled some regions altogether, the European countryside was deindustrialized; chances for finding village work disappeared and the pay rates for rural goods declined, reducing the ability of country workers to get by in the cottage economy. The “great transformation” set in motion by industrialization contributed to the steady loosening of longstanding controls on “internal” movement throughout the course of the nineteenth century also helped facilitate movement and propel the expansion of industrial cities and towns. These industrial centers attracted labor from
both domestic and international sources. As the real and perceived social repercussions of internal mobility became clearer, more and more states followed Britain’s lead and began to view emigration as a “safety valve” capable of offsetting the negative social impact of industrialization. Thus, longstanding barriers to “exit” were loosened in countries throughout Europe, increasing the scope of transnational movement.

These “epochal changes” had a direct impact on international migration. As Zolberg has noted, turn-of-the-century globalization induced a vast expansion of international migrations to unprecedented and hitherto truly inconceivable levels. Most spectacularly visible, in the Atlantic region as a whole (including both within Europe and overseas) the combined international flows grew fourfold within a forty-year period, from 2.7 million for the 1871–1880 decade to over 11 million in 1901–1910. Overseas migration to the major receivers alone (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, and the United States) expanded in the same span by an even more dramatic fivefold factor, from 2.6 million to 12.9 million.

Not only did the scale of immigration expand markedly, the geographic range of sending countries did as well. Industrial capitalism’s penetration into Europe’s southern and eastern hinterlands prompted a significant increase in migration from these areas. Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Russia, and the newly independent Balkan states all experienced high rates of emigration during this time and quickly developed into important sending countries. Violence visited upon religious and national minorities, particularly East European Jews, also contributed to the great waves of emigration from these regions.

The thrust of European imperialism into Asia prompted mass population movements from this part of the world as well; a process driven in large part by increasing demand for commodities such as natural rubber, palm oil, cotton, coffee, cocoa, tea, and sugar in Europe. These commodities were produced in plantations owned by white Europeans and worked, for the most part, by imported Asian indentured laborers – the preferred form of colonial labor in the era following the abolition of the slave trade. “Coolie” labor was based on “short-term contracts bound by penal sanctions, linked to debts incurred in transit and invariably barbaric in its working conditions and levels of pay.” While indentured workers from India served as the key source of labor throughout the expanses of the British Empire, Chinese migration was also important, particularly in South East Asia and Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada. Japanese emigration to North and South America emerged in the wake of the Meiji Restoration and Japan’s extremely rapid industrialization.
In sum, turn-of-the-century globalization catalyzed and helped propel mass migration of hitherto unsurpassed scope and scale. More and more immigrants from increasingly variegated sources made their way to receiving states to work in factories and mines, build railroads, plant and pick crops, and take up the other dirty, difficult, and poorly paid jobs offered to them. Because rates of international migration accelerated so quickly, receiving states initially lacked the legal and administrative wherewithal to deal with this movement and therefore had to create mechanisms for managing flows and their social consequences. Thus, this was also a period of extensive policy experimentation among receiving countries. While economic factors – principally employers’ demands for cheap and abundant labor – weighed heavily on the minds of policymakers and helped sustain a period of relatively open borders, two other central preoccupations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – race and national identity – also played a key role in shaping incipient immigration and citizenship polices. The restrictions that were implemented were not simply barriers to movement; they were barriers to particular, racially defined peoples whose presence was deemed to be harmful to the development of the nation.

Race and National Identity during the First Wave of Globalization

Among the most striking features of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the widespread appeal of racism, by which I do not mean simple racial discrimination – a pernicious and all too common feature of contemporary societies – but a pervasive, scientifically-sanctioned belief in the superiority of the “white races” of northwestern Europe to other peoples, within and beyond Europe. Race thinking was bound up with both liberal and illiberal forms of government and was espoused by the leading lights of respective societies. It was propounded in polite and impolite company, in the popular press and learned scientific journals. Race and racially tinged integral nationalism were ubiquitous.

Ideas about race and the hierarchical relation of distinct human types qua races predate the first wave of globalization. What was different about turn-of-the-century racism was its scientific moorings and melding with concepts of nationhood. Charles Darwin’s *On the Origins of the Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871) propelled the emergence of a widely accepted science of race that branched into specialized fields such as physical anthropology and eugenics. Scholars in these fields devised intricate racial hierar-
chies that ranked groups according to their inherent traits and evolutionary development. Intellectual work along these lines mapped onto and reinforced other contemporaneous processes, including imperialism and nation building. With regard to imperialism, scientific racism reinforced the notion that differences in human types sanctioned the subjugation of “inferior peoples” by white Europeans: “Subjects of Empire were seen as unworthy of self-rule, as backward, as culturally interior, and so forth.” This outward orientation had an important domestic concomitant, as assumptions along these lines “embedded themselves in immigration policies, in the treatment of indigenous peoples, in the teaching of history, and in the basic world views of all Western peoples, even those who possessed no formal colonies across the water.”

Scientific racism helped to form a broadly encompassing global-level cultural code “founded largely on phenotypical distinctions within which the peoples of advanced industrial societies, northwest European whites, were the elect; this moral status... legitimized political domination and economic exploitation of the less worthy.” This code played an important role in influencing policymaking in the spheres of immigration and citizenship. While it did not compel states to impose racially exclusive controls, it provided a set of ideas that shaped thinking both about “preferred” and “non-preferred” groups and the means by which the latter ought to be regulated.

The ubiquity of racial classifications and the linking of race with national identity help make sense of the striking similarity of immigration restrictions and controls across receiving states during the first phase of globalization. As I have already noted, the point was not simply to limit the overall number of migrants entering the country; rather, efforts were made to minimize the perceived impact of particular peoples on the nation’s “health” and security. There existed a strongly felt fear that the more advanced races “were vulnerable to contamination from immigration and ‘hybridization’ with those who would pass along their deficiencies.” Ideas about racial suitability intersected with economic and national security concerns so that specific groups were deemed particularly dangerous. Policies were enacted to restrict the entry of these groups into the nation’s territory and its social structures. Liberalism’s comfortable coexistence with Social Darwinism, scientific racism, and xenophobia during this period of policy innovation ensured that the equality it propounded was reserved for members of the “superior races.” Thus liberalism was of little use to those groups subject to exclusions. Governments enjoyed relatively free reign in enacting highly illiberal laws, whether or not they professed to follow liberal democratic principles.
Immigration Policy and the Construction of White Canada, 1869–1929

Colonization and Early Settlement

While there is no question that Canada is a “settler country” built upon a colonial foundation, its development into a country of immigration was not straightforward. Immigration was quite limited during most of Canada’s colonial history. France’s efforts to settle colonists in the territory Jacques Cartier’s claimed for Francis I in 1534 were intermittent and unsuccessful. Only approximately 10,000 colonists were settled in “New France” in the years preceding the British conquest in 1760. Population growth, which had reached 70,000 on the eve of the French defeat, was driven almost exclusively by natural increase. Britain’s early hopes of quickly assimilating its new French Catholic subjects also came to very little. In lieu of the hoped for influx of British subjects – and mindful of the security threat posed by revolutionary developments in its restive colonies to the south – Britain granted grudging recognition of the “French fact” in North America through the passage of the Quebec Act in 1774.

The onset of the American War of Independence in 1775 gave rise to Canada’s first wave of mass immigration. Approximately 50,000 Loyalist refugees fled the incipient American republic and settled in British North America. Their arrival and demand for institutions befitting loyal subjects of the British Crown prompted another round of institutional change, leading to the creation of New Brunswick in 1784 and, significantly, the division of Quebec into Lower Canada (present-day Quebec) and Upper Canada (present-day Ontario) under the Constitution Act of 1791. The arrival of the Loyalists also helped to fix Canada’s emerging political identity: although the Constitution Act recognized the position of the Catholic Church and maintained established patterns of land holding in Quebec, both Upper and Lower Canada were granted representative institutions along British lines.

The years between 1830 and 1850 witnessed the second great wave of immigration to Canada, as large numbers of British subjects displaced by new agricultural practices, technological change, and famine came to the New World. The population of British North America rose from approximately 250,000 in 1790 to 1.6 million in 1845. Close to half of the immigrants from Britain were Irish. They continued to arrive in large numbers up until the 1850s, driven by poverty and the devastating famine of 1847. Most of these immigrants were settled in Upper Canada and helped increase the population of the province from approximately 95,000 in 1815 to...
952,000 in 1851. Their presence also helped spur the growth of agriculture, industrialization, and urbanization in Canada.\textsuperscript{35}

Despite this influx, Canada’s status as an immigration receiver was offset by its role as a major sending region. This was particularly true in the case of Lower Canada, where thousands of French Catholics departed for the mill towns of New England annually. Indeed, approximately 150,000 left for the U.S. in the 1850s alone. Mass emigration was also a factor in Upper Canada, with many Irish migrants remaining for only a short time before continuing their journeys southward, typically to New York or the American Midwest. Between 1860 and 1900 more people left Canada than entered it; for many, British North America served as a way station for a longer journey that would ultimately end in the United States.

During this period, Britain continued to struggle to find some means of dealing with the French Catholic challenge in Lower Canada. Renewed efforts at assimilation, spurred by Lord Durham’s 1840 report, led to further institutional engineering. The merging of Upper and Lower Canada into a single province was intended to take advantage of English Canada’s growing population to “swamp” French Catholics. However, this effort, like others before it, failed leading to further ruminations on the “question of Canada.” The constitutional arrangement devised by the Fathers of Confederation in 1867 represented yet another attempt to deal with the consequences of Canada’s dual colonial heritage. While it was designed to accommodate the presence of two “founding nations,” its admixture of monarchical principles, parliamentary institutions, and respect for English traditions gave it a distinctive identity. In the words of the new country’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada was destined to be a “subordinate kingdom” in the Empire.\textsuperscript{36}

From Laissez-Faire to Selectivity, 1869–1905

Even during the years of mass immigration between 1830 and 1860, Britain did not introduce measures that might be termed “immigration policies.” What regulations were devised consisted of Passenger Laws, which were typically ignored by ships’ captains, and measures to assist the movement of immigrants from their point of arrival to the interior of the country.\textsuperscript{37}

Canada’s first Immigration Act was passed in 1869, two years after Confederation. The Act granted the federal government “authority to deny entry to paupers and the mentally ill or physically disabled.” Subsequent amendments to the Act passed in the 1870s broadened the government’s ability to check the entry of the
poor, sick, and disabled but did not touch on matters pertaining to national identity. The absence of more robust controls in the 1869 Act reflected Canada’s continuing status as a country of emigration. Canada’s most pressing problem vis-à-vis migration at this time was its inability to retain its own natural population increase. Each year tens of thousands of Canadians emigrated to New England, New York, or the U.S. Midwest. Despite its best efforts, the Canadian government was unable to stem this out-migration from Britain and Europe. An estimated one-quarter of those who did cross the Atlantic to Canada subsequently moved on to the United States.

Indeed, the U.S. census of 1900 “counted 1.2 million Canadian-born in America, a number equal to a quarter of Canada’s 1901 population.” The 1869 Act was intended to check this trend and assist in the settlement of Canada’s vast western territories, thus complementing the Macdonald Conservative’s National Policy. The hope was that greater governmental oversight would help encourage more immigrants to arrive and stay in Canada. Excessive controls would detract from this objective and were therefore not looked at favorably by policymakers.

Although the Act imposed a minimum of restrictions and complemented the prevailing \emph{laissez-faire} philosophy of the time, it established a number of important precedents that would define Canadian policymaking in the years ahead. Most importantly, the Act delegated extremely broad authority to the federal cabinet. This permitted subsequent governments to change regulations governing admissions through Orders-in-Council, thereby avoiding the need to debate changes before Parliament. While this provided the executive with a great deal of flexibility in meeting challenges, it concentrated decision-making in a relatively closed circle of policymakers, thereby limiting oversight and increasing the likelihood of decisions being made to suit the whims of powerful political and private interests.

Controls during the first phase of immigration policymaking were minimal. Immigration was placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and was intended to assist in the settlement of Canada’s vast western territories. The 1869 Act granted the federal government “authority to deny entry to paupers and the mentally ill or physically disabled” but did not stipulate any racial or national preferences. Subsequent amendments to the Act passed in the 1870s broadened the government’s ability to check the entry of the poor, the sick, and the disabled.

The shift to identity-based exclusions emerged with the expansion of migration at the close of the nineteenth century. As the
numbers of immigrants entering Canada increased, so did their countries of origin. The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was accomplished in part by the labor of Chinese “navies” recruited to do the often-dangerous tasks that the project required. Southern and eastern Europeans were also recruited to build the CPR, work in mines and forestry, and provide much-needed labor power for other economic sectors. The completion of the railroad and introduction of weather resistant wheat facilitated the settlement of the west on a much greater scale, thereby increasing rates of immigration. With this success, however, came increased calls for the regulation of community and the guarding of the nation against the incursion of “foreigners.” This was registered initially through the implementation of controls on Chinese immigration, beginning with the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. The Act required all Chinese immigrants to pay a “head tax” of $50. Only diplomats, government representatives, tourists, merchants, scientists, and students were exempted. Ship captains were responsible for collecting the head tax and presenting a passenger list, along with the sum payable, to the port authorities, before passengers were allowed to disembark.44

The expansion of immigration was also propelled by the reorganization of the immigration program by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier’s Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, after the Liberal Party’s electoral victory in 1896. Under Sifton’s leadership, Canada committed itself more firmly to the rapid settlement of the west through the mass immigration of “agriculturalists.” This entailed wooing would-be immigrants from Britain, the United States, Germany and other northern European countries through promotional activities such as lectures, slide shows, and mobile exhibits. Printed materials in migrants’ native languages, “finder’s fees” for travel agents, and offers of free land were also used to attract potential settlers.45 Because immigration from Britain, the United States, France, and Germany proved to be insufficient, the geographic range of preferred source countries was expanded to include Central and Eastern Europe.46 Sifton famously declared that his idea of an ideal immigrant was a “stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for generations, with a stout wife and a half dozen children.”47 The Canadian government’s overriding objective was to “promote the immigration of farmers and farm laborers.”48 As such, all Europeans who fit the bill were welcome.

Sifton’s preference for sturdy European “agriculturalists” necessitated the elaboration of an organizational structure capable of attracting the ‘good’ immigrants while keeping out the ‘bad’. This was accomplished through the reorganization of the Canadian

immigration program and the formulation of policies aimed at regulating entry according to governmental preferences. Thus, policy moved away from laissez faire to greater control. The Alien Labour Act of 1897 was enacted to limit Canadian employers’ propensity to import contract laborers, particularly railroad workers from the United States. A 1902 amendment to the Immigration Act was added to exclude “diseased persons” and in 1903 the head tax on Chinese immigrants was doubled bringing it to $100; in 1903, the levy was raised still further to $500.

Immigration, Citizenship and Nation-Building, 1905–1914

The elaboration of identity-based exclusions was carried out under the tutelage of Sifton’s successor, Frank Oliver. While Oliver shared Sifton’s preference for farmers, he was less enamored with the non-British migrants his predecessor had actively recruited. Speaking on behalf of his fellow western Canadians, Oliver noted that:

[T]here is nothing we more earnestly resent than the idea of settling up the country with people who will be a drag on our civilization and progress. We did not go out to that country simply to produce wheat. We went to build up a nation, a civilization, a social system that we could enjoy, be proud of and transmit to our children; and we resent the idea of having the millstone of this Slav population hung around our necks in our efforts to build up, beautify and improve the country, and so improve the whole of Canada.49

As Oliver’s comments make clear, continental Europeans were regarded as impediments to nation building. At the same time, however, they met the needs of powerful economic actors. This generated a distinct political cleavage:

Those who tended to be concerned about issues of assimilability of immigrants and the preservation of Anglo-Canadian norms and values tended to support a selective and restrictive approach to immigration, as did those who wanted to limit labour supply in the interests of preserving wage rates and improving conditions at work. In contrast, those who benefited from inexpensive labour advocated an expansive, relatively unrestrained approach to immigrant admissions.50

Expansionists represented a small, if powerful, minority. Reflecting the prejudices of the time, churches, labor leaders, progressive intellectuals, physicians, academics, and members of the media agreed that Canada’s moral fabric was threatened by the importation of “inferior races.”51 Anglo-Saxon angst was matched by French Canadian nationalists’ fear of being swamped by waves of
non-French-speaking others. Henri Bourassa went so far as to argue that federal government funds would be better-spent repatriating French Canadian emigrants from New England than luring eastern Europeans to western Canada. French Canadian nationalists also railed against the migration of European Jews, arguing that they hindered the economic and moral development of French-Catholic society. Indeed, elements of the “new anti-Semitism” that was emerging in Europe during this period were increasingly common in Quebec and across Canada. Like their European counterparts, Canadian anti-Semites such as Goldwin Smith and the founder of the Social Credit movement, Major Clifford Douglas, cast Jews as a wholly unassimilable “race” bent on exploiting host societies for selfish gain.

Nativist reaction was not limited to hardcore racists. The continuing expansion of migration during the years before World War I intersected with growing concerns among Canadian intellectuals regarding the challenge immigration posed to national integration. Among the most influential comments in this vein was J. S. Woodsworth’s Strangers within Our Gates. Woodsworth’s position is particularly important as it represents the mainstream of elite progressive opinion. As Kelley and Trebilcock rightly note, “his writings and lectures reveal the degree of acceptability that notions of racial superiority held, even among those most sympathetic to the plight of the economically downtrodden and politically oppressed.” Woodsworth’s analysis of Canada’s immigration problem drew heavily from the dominant scientific discourse of the day and he categorized immigrants’ ability to assimilate into Canadian culture according to their ranking on what Richard Day has called the “Great Chain of Race”: the prevailing racial hierarchy advanced by scientific race theories.

Woodsworth’s analysis of immigrant difference and its impact on Canadian identity led him to advance a two-pronged strategy for managing the immigration-membership dilemma: on the one hand, eastern and southeastern Europeans should be subject to strenuous assimilation the end of which was to transform them into acceptable, English speaking citizens with manners and habits consistent with the dominant Anglo-Canadian national character. This would be accomplished through the work of local religiously based organizations and public educational systems. Those considered to be beyond the scope of assimilation – i.e. Orientals and Africans – would be excluded outright via immigration restrictions. According to Woodsworth, non-assimilable elements were clearly detrimental to Canada’s national development and therefore “should be vigorously excluded.”
Woodsworth’s proposed solutions to Canada’s immigration-membership dilemma were consistent with trends in broader elite opinion and, increasingly, governmental policy. The Immigration Act of 1906 set an important precedent by clarifying the criteria to be used to determine the suitability of would-be migrants. Among the most important addition to the government’s control apparatus was an expanded list of prohibited classes. The task of determining admissibility was left to boards of inquiry made up of an immigration agent, medical officer, or any other officer or officers appointed by the minister. The minister was also granted the power to hear and judge appeals to decisions reached by the boards of inquiry. Inadmissible immigrants and immigrants who became a public charge, committed a crime involving moral turpitude, or had become and inmate of a jail or hospital within two years of their landing were subject to removal from Canada. The Act also included a more elastic provision granting the Cabinet the power to prohibit the landing of “any specified class of immigrants.” The Cabinet was authorized to enact landing-money requirements which could “vary according to the class and destination” of immigrants and “otherwise according to the circumstances.” In public pronouncements, Oliver made clear that the government was no longer interested in promoting the immigration of continental Europeans.

The policy orientation of the 1906 Immigration Act and subsequent regulations enacted in 1908 were reinforced in a new Immigration Act introduced in 1910. A major innovation was the right of Cabinet to enact regulations that excluded the entry of immigrants “belonging to any race deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada or immigrants of any specified class, occupation, or character” and those immigrants who came to Canada other than by “continuous journey.” The state’s deportation powers were also enhanced through the introduction of the concept of domicile, according to which domicile was obtained only after legal landing and three years lawful residence in Canada. Immigrants lacking such a status would be subject to deportation if they became a member of an undesirable class, which included purveyors of moral turpitude (pimps, prostitutes, etc.), “convicted criminals, public charges, inmates of jails, hospitals, and insane asylums.” Political radicalism was also deemed to be grounds for deportation.

Despite the thoroughness of the 1910 Act, its aim of restricting immigration to healthy, white, preferably British or American agriculturalists was limited by pressures brought to bear by employers keen on maintaining, if not expanding, supplies of cheap immigrant labor for decidedly non-agricultural enterprises, such
as mining, logging, railway construction, and saw mill operations.\textsuperscript{62} The belated success of the National Policy in fostering Canadian-based industry came back to haunt immigration planners, whose long-term strategies were upset by employers’ short-term economic interests.\textsuperscript{63}

The solution, or solutions, to this dilemma included the further elaboration of formal immigration policy at the “front gate” and, importantly, allowing for continued access to officially non-preferred migrants through a widening “back door.”\textsuperscript{64} Back door strategies included employers’ active recruitment of foreign laborers with the tacit approval of the government. Recruitment was also carried out on behalf of employers by hundreds of private labor agencies that typically specialized in particular nationalities.\textsuperscript{65} The end result during periods of economic expansion was a steady flow of precisely the type of migrants Sifton, Oliver, Canadian labor unions, and nativists sought to restrict: continental Europeans – Italians, Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, and others – who were not “agriculturalists” but rather wage laborers.

Restrictions on the entry of “unsuitable races” were more comprehensive than those directed at stemming the flow of continental European laborers. This reflected the limits of employers’ influence on governmental policy. Whereas non-preferred Europeans upset labor unions and provoked fears of swamping among Anglo- and French-Canadian nationalists, the potential entry of large numbers of non-white “races” generated acute discomfort at the highest levels of the state. The reasons for this discomfort were rooted in prevailing attitudes toward non-European peoples and the fear that anti-Asian nativism in British Columbia might threaten political stability in the province.

For a time, the federal government sought to manage Asian migration through a combination of restriction, as reflected in the Chinese Immigration Act, and limited back door recruitment. Thus, although both the federal government and the Privy Council accepted British Columbia’s decision to prohibit the addition of Chinese persons on voting lists, thereby disenfranchising them both at the provincial and federal levels (as placement on provincial voting lists was a prerequisite for voting in federal elections), it consistently sided with the province’s economic power brokers in striking down the provincial legislation aiming at the total exclusion of Asians or limitations on the employment of Chinese and Japanese migrants.\textsuperscript{66}

The Vancouver Riot of 1907 acted as a catalyst for the formulation of more definitive restrictions against “Asiatic” immigration.\textsuperscript{67} The federal government responded to the riot by tightening restrictions against Asian migration, through the imposition of strict

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medical examinations, demands for a $200 “landing money” payment to be paid upon arrival, and implementation of the continuous journey clause, which held that immigrants entering Canada must arrive via continuous voyage from the country of their birth or citizenship with tickets bought in those same countries. All of these innovations were passed as Orders-in-Council in 1908 and were subsequently woven into the 1910 Immigration Act. Furthermore, a “gentleman’s agreement” was negotiated with the Japanese government to limit the number of visas granted for travel to Canada to 400 per year.

Although the Laurier government had also drafted an Order-in-Council to prohibit the landing in Canada of “any immigrant of the Negro race,” it ultimately choose to restrict African American immigration through more “informal” measures, including the strict interpretation of medical and character examinations. The Department of Immigration made it clear that examinations made at the border would likely result in the rejection of most black immigrants. “So effective was the ‘strict interpretation’ policy that the number of black immigrants fell from 136 in 1907–1908 to seven in 1909–1910.” Other elements of Canada’s “informal” policy to restrict African American immigration included convincing the CPR not to provide African Americans with services normally granted to prospective American immigrants.

Prohibitions on political rights and de facto barriers to naturalization for “unsuitable races” were also key elements in the Canadian state’s evolving immigration policy regime. Provincial barriers to naturalization in Alberta and British Columbia were not challenged by the courts and restrictions on the exercise of voting rights were also allowed to stand. The harmonization of naturalization across the British Dominions, which culminated in the New Naturalization Act of 1914, tightened naturalization requirements and granted the Secretary of State absolute discretion in the granting of citizenship along with the power to revoke the citizenship of naturalized immigrants.

War, Recovery and the Crystallization of White Canada, 1914–1929

By 1914, the fundamental characteristics of Canada’s immigration policy regime were in place. In times of economic growth, a greater proportion of non-preferred groups would be allowed to enter Canada to assuage labor needs. During economic downturns, the main gate would be narrowed and the back door more thoroughly policed. Groups deemed unsuitable were subject to special restric-
tions and, increasingly after 1907, outright exclusion. Naturalization was used to police the boundaries of the nation internally, as was deportation, particularly during economic bad times. Conversely, the Canadian state also expended a great deal of effort in attracting preferred immigrants, particularly white agriculturalists from the British Isles, the United States, and northwestern Europe. Thus, the period during which Canada developed its immigration control apparatus also coincided with periods of massive immigration. While not all of the newcomers met the standards set by the immigration bureaucracy, many did. Those who did not were subject to assimilative pressures, the ends of which were to transform second-rate foreigners into acceptable, English-speaking Canadians.

The regime established during the early part of the twentieth century served as the basis for immigration policymaking through World War I, the interwar period, and beyond. The flexibility of the system and the extensive discretion granted to immigration officers, the minister, and the federal cabinet allowed for rapid adjustments in policy in response to changing domestic and international conditions. Thus, during the early years of WWI, “enemy aliens” crowding municipal welfare rolls were interned in camps and/or deported, through the combined exercise of immigration policy and the War Measures Act. When demands for war provisions, conscription, and the entry of the United States into the war led to a shortage of labor for the war industries, policy was adjusted, the camps were emptied and the “enemy aliens” were put to work. Similarly, controls on non-preferred immigrants were tightened during the economic downturn that accompanied the initial postwar period and loosened once the economy improved. When supplies of preferred British and American immigrants did not keep up with the demand for labor, the government acceded to the needs of industry and widened the gap for non-preferred Europeans through innovations such as the Railway Agreement. At the same time, preferred migrants were recruited even more aggressively through the Empire Settlement Agreement and Farm Family Settlement Schemes, which provided transportation assistance and other incentives to British immigrants willing to become Canadian farmers.

The interwar era also marked the definitive exclusion of “unsuitable races,” as the need for unskilled labor in British Columbia diminished and racist xenophobia throughout Canadian society deepened. Innovations such as visa and passport requirements were introduced and existing legislation and accompanying regulations were revised. An important amendment to Clause c of
Section 38 of the 1910 Immigration Act passed in 1919 allowed Canada to

[p]rohibit or limit in number for a stated period or permanently the landing in Canada or the landing at any specified port or ports of entry in Canada, of any immigrants belonging to any nationality or race or of immigrants of any specified class or occupation, by reason of any economic, industrial or other condition temporarily existing in Canada or because such immigrants are deemed unsuitable having regard to the climate, industrial, social, educational, labour, or other conditions or requirements of Canada or because such immigrants are deemed undesirable owing to the peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, and methods of holding property, and because of their probable inability to become readily assimilated or to assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after their entry.77

Demands for the total exclusion of Oriental migrants voiced by a broad coalition including the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), the British Columbia legislature, teachers’ associations, war veterans’ associations, the Retail Merchants Association of Canada, the Asiatic Exclusion League, and the Ku Klux Klan of Canada, among others, were answered by the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act. In place of the Head Tax featured in its 1885 predecessor, the new Act limited entry or landing of persons of Chinese origin (irrespective of their allegiance or citizenship) to: diplomatic and consular personnel; children born in Canada of Chinese race or descent who had left Canada for educational or other purposes; merchants, i.e. individuals who devoted their undivided attention to mercantile pursuits, had no less than $2500 invested in an enterprise importing goods to Canada or exporting goods of Chinese or Canadian manufacture, who had conducted business for at least three years; and students coming to Canada for study at recognized Canadian educational institutions.78 The Act made no provision for the relatives of Canadians of Chinese descent or of persons of Chinese origin living in Canada. Several Orders-in-Council reinforced the aim of the 1919 Amendment.

In sum, Canada succeeded in establishing a complex apparatus designed to ensure that immigration did not impinge on its status as a “white man’s country.” Limits on non-preferred Continental European migrants also reflected doubts as to the ability of the country to assimilate inferior whites without imperiling its racial composition and level of civilization.79 Growing anxiety over assimilative capacity and the dangers posed by the entry of even a small number of immigrants from unsuitable races reflected the influence of prevailing ideas pertaining to race and national identity, held by intellectuals, civil servants, politicians, doctors, psychologists, social workers, progressive reformers, and members of the media.80 By the late 1920s, there was virtual agreement as

to the necessity of regulating immigration with an eye to maintaining the health and development of the nation. Thus, Canada’s status as an immigration country was highly circumscribed by its equally important status as an emergent nation-state with definite boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Immigration was a necessary evil to be tolerated in order to satisfy labor market needs and complete the process of westward expansion and consolidation.

**Germans and Others: Migration and National Identity, 1871–1929**

From Emigration to Immigration, 1871–1890

In the years prior to and immediately after the founding of the second German Empire in 1871, the North German Confederacy and various political entities that came to form the Kaiserreich witnessed huge waves of emigration. German migrants’ principle destination was the United States, though Argentina, Brazil, and Canada were also host to significant levels of German immigration. Overseas emigration peaked between 1880 and 1893, when approximately 1.8 million persons left Germany. Emigration helped to ease pressures produced by a steeply rising population, which itself was generated by a combination of declining death rates and high birth rates. Emigration trailed off after 1893 as a result of declining birth rates and increases in domestic employment opportunities generated by rapid industrialization. Economic bad times in the United States also played a role in dissuading potential migrants from traveling overseas.

The expansion of the domestic labor market prompted increases in internal migration, from the agricultural regions of the Prussian northeast, to the industrializing centers of western Prussia and the Ruhr region. The shift from transatlantic to internal migration marked the acceleration of the second industrial revolution in Germany and the “transformation of millions of landless poor and smallholders into an industrial proletariat.” The reduction in transportation costs and the expansion of railways facilitated movement from farms to factories. Aggressive recruiting by western employers in the rural northeast also helped draw migrants from the countryside to Germany’s urban-industrializing regions.

The period spanning 1871 and 1913 marked Germany’s transformation from an agrarian state with powerful industry to an industrial state with an agricultural base. This profound shift in social relations had important implications for migration. The
internal movement of Germans from east to west left landowners in Prussia’s eastern provinces in need of labor. While competition with the United States and other agricultural producers on the international market necessitated cutting costs, the shift to higher-yield root crops required a large number of workers willing to accept a demanding and entirely unpleasant form of labor. The solution to this conundrum lay in the recruitment of foreign workers, principally from the nearest and most convenient sources at hand: the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. As the elimination of feudal relations in both these empires had prompted a comparable displacement of the peasantry, there existed a large supply of potential workers willing to cross the border for relatively better wages in the German east. The fact that most of these workers were Poles, however, prompted a sharp reaction among those less enamored with foreign labor. The settlement of Jewish traders, craftsmen, and shopkeepers that followed their traditional clientele to Germany also provoked consternation among German nationalists.

The entry of large numbers of Polish foreign workers into Prussia raised fears that the newcomers would hinder the “Germanization” of the Prussian east (and its indigenous ethnic Polish minority) and lead instead to the “Polinization” of the region. As one editorialist put it:

Polinization is taking place in certain regions that had previously been won over to Germanic customs, culture, and language. A wave of Polish immigration is inundating our eastern provinces. That wave grows ever larger, the greater the feeling of discontent among Poles in Russia. In this way, the Polish element is being continually augmented. And it is precisely those Poles emigrating from Russia who bring with them a high degree of dissatisfaction and longing for the liberation of Poland from Russian bondage. Here they fan flames that otherwise would probably be extinguished under the ashes. All this forces upon us the question as to whether it is not in fact necessary – to close the door tightly on any further expansion of Polish culture and their national-political conception.

Thus, large-scale labor migration aimed at offsetting an economic crisis in agriculture ran headlong into a key source of German nationalist angst: the so-called “Polish Question.”

While the Prussian government recognized the need for labor among large landowners, the perceived negative impact of mass Polish migration outweighed it. In Bismarck’s words:

[We could not concede that the need for manpower in the border regions was of greater importance than the political dangers and threat to the state posed by a Polinization of a large segment of the Prussian population. Though recognizing agriculture as the most important of all trades, we deem it as a lesser evil for the
individual regions to suffer from a shortage of manpower than for the state – and its future – to suffer any impairment. 91

The threat of “Polinization” prompted swift and decisive action in the spring of 1885. In March, Bismarck ordered Prussia’s provincial departments to deport some 30,000–40,000 foreigners, principally Roman Catholic Poles but also a significant number of Jews. Prussian women married to foreign Poles were also expelled, along with their children. 92 Complementing the deportation policy was a strict prohibition on the recruitment of any Polish laborers from the Austrian and Russian empires, and a policy of internal colonization that entailed the state’s purchase of Polish-owned estates for resale to German settlers. Bismarck hoped that that the deportation and colonization policies and continuation of the Kulturkampf in Polish Prussia would eventually neutralize Polish nationalism in the German east. 93

Becoming an “Labor-Importing Country,” 1890–1912

Although Bismarck’s prohibition on foreign Polish labor generated criticism among agribusiness interests, their alignment with the “Iron Chancellor” endured, in part because the need for such labor had not yet reached crisis proportions. This would only come as the transformation of the countryside intensified in the years after the introduction of the anti-Polish decrees. The increasing popularity of sugar beet cultivation heightened demands for seasonal labor: whereas the ratio of required manpower in the heaviest working month to the lightest in grain farming was 1.6 to 1, for sugar beet production it stood at 4 to 1. 94 This need for seasonal agricultural workers further weakened the traditional rural economy and effectively transformed remaining semi-independent farmers into rural wage laborers. Although labor shortages meant that these individuals could demand relatively high wages during the peak of the growing season, the instability of seasonal work and lack of social benefits prompted further flight from the countryside and a worsening of the labor situation from the perspective of East Elbian landowners. By 1890, market pressures and increasing indebtedness prompted agribusiness interests to voice renewed demands for foreign labor. According to the district administrative head (Regierungspräsident) of Oppeln, there was no choice “but to reopen the closed frontiers and once more . . . permit the entry of Russian-Polish and Galician laborers. By dint of their modest requirements and diligence,” they would be capable of “providing agriculture with effective, longer-term relief.” 95
Demands from powerful economic interests for access to foreign labor compelled Bismarck’s successor, Count Caprivi, to reconsider the ban on Polish labor migration, over the stern of objections of the Prussian Ministries of Education, Culture, and the Interior. And yet, the fear of “Polinization” that had prompted the initial policy response in 1885 had not abated. If anything, worries about the influence of foreign Poles on the “Polish Question” had intensified during the interim, as national security concerns intersected with more general fears of swamping by lower orders from the east. In order to satisfy demands for labor while simultaneously guarding against the perceived affects of migration on national integration, a system of tightly controlled temporary labor migration was conceived and enacted. The aim of the system was to ensure that Germany did not become a country of immigration, but rather a “labor-importing country,” in which migrant workers were utilized as a disposable labor force.

The system established in 1890 allowed for the recruitment of foreign labor from Russia and Austrian Galicia for agricultural enterprises in Prussia’s eastern provinces. Only unmarried laborers were permitted to enter and permission to work was granted from April 1 to November 15 exclusively. The introduction of mandatory rotation and a “closure period” (Karenzzeit) during which Polish workers were required to leave Prussia was meant to “impress upon both foreign workers and the local German population that such workers were merely aliens whose presence was tolerated and that their permanent settlement in Prussia was out of the question.” The decrees of 1890 therefore established a central pillar of Germany’s immigration policy: the rejection of immigration proper and pursuit of temporary labor recruitment in its stead.

The elaboration of immigration control followed shortly thereafter, as the large landowners who benefited most from the entry of foreign workers demanded that the Prussian state take measures to counter foreign workers’ tendency to breach the terms of their contracts and walk off the job. Demands for greater control also emerged among nationalist opponents of migration; in lieu of a total ban of Polish foreign workers, greater surveillance and supervision of foreigners was urged by groups such as the Pan-German League (Alldeutscher Verband). The Prussian Ministries of Culture and War also pushed for greater state oversight in the sphere of labor migration. State officials believed that leaving the recruitment of foreign workers solely to employers and their agents was not in the best interests of the state.

The culmination of these pressures led the Ministry of Agriculture to establish the Prussian Farm Workers Agency
(Preußische Feldarbeiterzentrale) in 1905, renamed the German Farm Workers Agency (Deutsche Feldarbeiterzentrale) in 1912. The Agency was established as a private entity that functioned as a coordinating bureau for the Ministry of Agriculture.\textsuperscript{103} It “was designed to bring under one roof all recruitment of foreign agricultural workers and... totally eliminate any competition of commercial procurement agents and private middlemen.” Moreover, the “concentration of employment activities in the hand of one agency would allow for the possibility... to attract and hire elements less dangerous (from a national perspective) in place of the previously predominant Russian-Polish and Galician workers. In this way, the need in agriculture for foreign workers could be properly reconciled with the desire of the state, dictated by an interest in self-preservation, to protect itself... against antinational immigration.”\textsuperscript{104}

The centralization of control under the Farm Workers Agency was assisted by the Prussian Interior Ministry’s introduction of the “compulsory domestic permit” (Inlandslegitimierungszwang) in 1907. Initially meant only for Polish foreign laborers, by 1909, all foreign workers in Prussia were required to possess a permit card that noted their national origin and other personal data, along with the name of their employer. Inclusion of employers’ names on the permit checked workers’ exit option, as those who engaged in “breach of contract” were subject to deportation if they ran afoul of the authorities. Change of employers could only be arranged with the authorized employer’s blessing, and a second copy of the permit was kept on file to assist the police in tracking “illegal” migrants.\textsuperscript{105} Despite the Labor Agency’s monopoly on legitimization, recruitment and distribution of foreign laborers was still largely left to private agencies. Control over the hiring of illegal foreign workers by western industrialists was also tempered by the recognition that industry could not function without foreign workers.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, the centralization of control was supplemented by the continuation of intermittently policed back door migration, which itself reflected differences among interest groups and the Prussian ministries beholden to them.\textsuperscript{107}

The system of temporary labor migration enacted at the turn of the century facilitated massive transnational movements into Germany. On the eve of World War I, Prussia alone accounted for nearly a 1 million foreign migrant workers, in agriculture and industry.\textsuperscript{108} Of these migrants, Poles from Austria-Hungary and Russia made up approximately 66 per cent of all agricultural workers in Prussia in 1913 and 30 per cent of the total labor force.\textsuperscript{109} Whereas migrants from these countries occasionally took up long-term residence in Prussia and other German Länder,
compulsory rotation helped maintain the seasonal character of Polish migration. For example, of the 270,496 Poles employed in Prussia in 1913, only 3,213 remained in the country at the end of the year.\textsuperscript{110} While far from perfect, the regulatory mechanisms put in place to guard against “Polinization of the East” helped to maintain a mass labor force that met the needs of East Elbian landowners and German industrialists while at the same time respecting Prussian state officials’ interest in excluding “unwanted elements.”

Of course, not everyone was pleased with this arrangement. Despite the system’s careful weighing of distinctly political concerns and advancement of an explicitly anti-Polish “defense policy,” nationalists remained apprehensive about the impact of eastern migration on German society. Sources of discontent ranged from the extreme Right Pan-German League and Society in Support of the Germans in the Eastern Marches (\textit{Verein zur Förderung des Deutschtums in den Ostmarken}) to the National Liberals and leading academics, including Max Weber. Weber’s position on the impact of foreign workers in the German east provides us with a revealing insight into the perceived threats posed by transnational movement on Germany’s national integration. It highlights the degree to which turn of the century German liberals could assimilate what are by contemporary standards highly illiberal positions on nationality and immigration.\textsuperscript{111}

According to Weber, the recruitment of foreign Poles and Slavs was causing the “displacement” of native German peasants from the eastern lands. As the number of foreign workers increased, wage levels declined, compelling those remaining German peasants whose superior cultural condition precluded them from stooping to the level of foreign workers to leave the land for the factories of Brandenburg and points further west.\textsuperscript{112} Even more alarmingly, the “flooding” of Germany by “swarms of eastern nomads” threatened to derail the all-important project of raising the “domestic Polish proletariat to the German cultural level.”\textsuperscript{113} Given that many German-Poles were joining their German compatriots in migrating to the Ruhr region to work in its factories and mines, mass migration of foreign Poles threatened not only the “Polinization of the East” but of the West as well. Weber’s proposed solution to the threat of foreign labor was a reinstatement of the ban on Polish migration decreed by Bismarck; for the Kings of Prussia had not been called upon to “rule over a rural proletariat without a fatherland and over wandering Slavs alongside Polish peasants and depopulated latifunda... but over German peasants alongside a class of large landowners whose workers know that they will be able to find their own future independence in their homeland.”\textsuperscript{114}
Weber’s diagnosis and prescription was phrased much more radically by extreme Right-wing elements. In the words of one editorialist:

[T]he inundation of our German lands with foreigners of an inferior character has led in those areas particularly affected to a level of general insecurity incompatible with the essence of an advanced cultural nation... the unbridled coarseness, ill-bred depravity, and licentious passion of these emissaries of foreign peoples will, wherever they come into contact with the morally dubious elements within our own peoples, corrupt the last vestige of any positive qualities in those individuals and increase the danger of a general degeneration and decline into barbarism... It is high time we started to search seriously for some remedy. We must endeavor to keep such persons at a far remove from the body of our nation and eradicate them on the spot.115

Ulrich Herbert notes that “‘patriotic’ misgivings regarding the admission of foreign workers were widespread, extending all the way into the conservative wing of the Social Democrats.”116 Indeed, the challenge posed by the recruitment of foreign laborers vexed the German Left throughout the years leading up to WWI. Whereas the leadership of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) advocated international freedom of movement and solidarity with foreign workers, pressure from the rank and file prompted a strong current of protectionism as well. Part of the problem lay in the inability of the German trade unions to organize foreign workers.117 So long as foreigners were regarded as unfair competitors and potential threats to the interests of “natives,” internationalism was typically accompanied by calls for “prudent” restrictions on immigration.

Neither the nativist Right nor organized labor succeeded in derailing the system of labor migration devised by Prussian administrators. Foreign labor was too important to both East Elbian landowners and industrialists throughout the Reich. As one speaker at the Sixth Congress of Labor Exchanges in Breslau put it, foreigners were needed to perform the “difficult, often dirty and disgusting jobs... that a flabby or pampered working class... prefers to avoid. Thus, foreigners do not appear as genuine competitors but rather as representatives of a second-rate working-class, akin to Negroes in the eastern states of the U.S., the Chinese in California and Australia, coolies in the British West Indies, the Japanese in Hawaii.”118 Foreign laborers would serve as a cheap and expendable “reserve army,” used to fuel economic expansion in good times and discarded with impunity during downturns. Another contemporary observer noted that the German economy was reaping “great benefits from the labor of foreign workers.” The aim of future governments should therefore be to “eliminate
impediments to the employment of foreigners . . . and . . . adapt regulation of foreign labor to actual existing conditions.”

“Unwanted Elements” and the Nationalization of Citizenship

Labor migration for agriculture and industry was not the only source of mass transnational movement into Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. This was also a period during which large numbers of East European Jews crossed into Germany either to continue their journey to North America or to settle in the Reich. Violence directed at Jews in the Russian Empire was a key factor behind this movement. By the turn of the century, over 100,000 refugees emigrated from Russia each year and, by 1914, approximately two and a half million had settled in the United States, England, France, Canada, and Argentina. German shipping companies such as the Hamburg-America line sought to reap the economic benefits of this movement and went to great lengths to facilitate the flow of Jews through the port cities of Hamburg and Bremen.

What was a boon for shipping companies triggered panic among anti-Semites and extreme nationalists. As was the case with Polish labor migrants, the movement of Jewish “transmigrants” through Germany prompted fear of imminent “floods” from the East and calls for greater control and exclusion. Though demands for a complete ban on the entry of all East European Jews were voiced as early as 1895, the anti-Semitic Right never succeeded in realizing this goal. Trade treaties with the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires placed a diplomatic barrier in front of such approaches, as did domestic political opposition to such explicit manifestations of anti-Semitism among members of the Catholic Center Party and the SPD. In place of more direct approaches aimed at singling out Jews, German bureaucrats relied upon regulatory measures to effectively police national boundaries.

Efforts to minimize the impact of Jewish migration began at the state’s outer borders. Controls at the point of entry had to impede the settlement of Eastern Jews in Germany while permitting them to cross into the country to embark on ships destined for England or North America.

German states bordering the Tsarist and Hapsburg empires organised an elaborate programme to concentrate Jewish travellers at frontier stations and expedite them out of the country. After undergoing health tests and delousing, transmigrants were herded into sealed trains and sent on to transit hostels located near major train terminals along the route to North Sea ports. When the transmigrants reached Hamburg, they were detained in barracks until their ship departed. Government
officials strove to isolate the transmigrants from the German populace and to ensure their quick evacuation from the Reich.¹²⁶

Those Eastern Jews who managed to evade such controls had to secure a residency permit. Such permits were required of all transients and could only be obtained by registering with the local police. This allowed state officials to maintain a vigilant watch on all foreigners and limit the duration of their stays. Expiration of a residency permits also opened the door to deportation – another key component of the regulatory framework. Eastern Jews were denied residency permits by authorities in Prussia’s border areas, “for fear of being ‘flooded by foreign Jewish elements of the Slavic mother-tongue’.”¹²⁷ Other districts were also notorious for denying Eastern Jews permission to establish lawful residency, while still others admitted Jews only on a highly selective basis, often putting conditions on their stay that did not apply to members of other groups.¹²⁸

The final line of defence against Eastern Jews and other “unwanted elements” lay in the manipulation of naturalization procedures. In an effort to limit the discretion of local authorities in granting naturalization to Eastern European Jews, the Prussian Interior Ministry assumed the power to vet all Jewish applications for citizenship. This limited the naturalization of first generation Jewish migrants in Prussia.¹²⁹ Prussian officials also sought to offset more generous attitudes toward the naturalization of Jews and Poles in some of Germany’s western Länder. This was to counter a tendency among some Jewish migrants to apply for naturalization in more liberal Länder and then return to Prussia in much better legal position after their petitions had been accepted.

Prussia’s insistence on establishing greater uniformity in naturalization procedures was realized with the passage of the 1913 Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz (RuStAG). The law marked an important turning point in the regulation of membership in Germany. Its elevation of the principle of descent (jus sanguinis) aimed to ensure the maintenance of German citizenship among the German Diaspora overseas, while at the same time limiting the ability of non-German foreigners to attain German citizenship in all but exceptional cases.¹³⁰ The latter dimension of the law served as a central means of ensuring that foreign migrants could continue to be used to satisfy economic needs without threatening the unity of the homogenous German nation.¹³¹ The law also centralized naturalization policy by mandating that all applications for citizenship must gain the approval in principle of all the federal Länder. This granted Prussia, the state with the most restrictive
policies at that time, the ability to block naturalizations in other, more liberal Länder.\textsuperscript{132}

The shift to an increasingly exclusive citizenship regime based on the principle of descent did not simply mark the continuation of business as usual.\textsuperscript{133} According to Dieter Gosewinkel, the 1913 law “codified a secular change in German citizenship policy during the 1800s, from territorially based to descent-based principles, and institutionalized this paradigm change for the twentieth century.”\textsuperscript{134} One of the catalysts for this break was the rise of nativist far-Right nationalist groups.\textsuperscript{135} These actors played an important role in placing immigration and citizenship policy in the context of both the Polish and Jewish “Questions.” Whereas outright bans on Jewish migration failed to yield necessary support among other parties and actors, a citizenship policy based on \textit{jus sanguinis} that effectively sheltered the German \textit{Volk} from infiltration by Poles and Jews \textit{did} resonate across the political spectrum, thereby granting what had been an extreme position greater acceptability. Indeed, during the parliamentary debates over the reform of the citizenship law in 1912–1913, only left liberals, members representing the indigenous Danish and Polish minorities, and members of the SPD came out strongly in favour of a more open policy that included elements \textit{jus soli}. The SPD’s Karl Liebknecht maintained that a foreign worker deemed worthy of being exploited ought also to be granted the opportunity to become a German citizen.\textsuperscript{136} According to Liebknecht, only a “certain moral perversity” could lead one to deny the validity of this claim.\textsuperscript{137} And yet, it was strenuously denied, and not only by extreme nationalists. In responding to the SPD’s proposals, Dr. Emil Belzer of the Catholic Center Party stated that he did not care to endorse the “mass naturalization of Galician peddlers” or “thousands of poor agricultural workers.” Rather, Belzer claimed that his party was “obligated to ensure that our municipalities are protected against the naturalization of morally or economically dubious elements.”\textsuperscript{138} Despite its veiled language, Belzer’s statement illustrates that the 1913 law was in part a response to the challenge of mass migration of “unwanted elements” from Russia and Austria-Hungary. Negative reaction to Jews (“Galician peddlers”) and Poles (“poor agricultural workers”) helped to spur the nationalization of citizenship in Imperial Germany.

The Narrowing of Temporary Labor Migration and Citizenship, 1914–1929

By the eve of WWI, Germany had established the central pillars of its twentieth century migration regime: temporary labor migration
coupled with restrictive naturalization and citizenship policies. Not unlike what occurred in Canada, the war gave rise to circumstances that ratcheted up the degree of coercive power employed by the state against foreigners. The failure of the German army to secure a decisive victory early in the conflict produced heightened demands for labor in the German war economy. Germany turned to several sources of labor to meet this demand, including captured prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian foreign workers, both from Russia, an enemy state, and Austria-Hungary, a key ally. Coercion was used to extract labor from both POWs and civilian foreign laborers. Polish workers ordinarily required to return to their home states at the close of the rotation period were compelled to remain in Germany, against their will if necessary. Although the extraction of coerced labor from foreign civilian workers did not proceed without difficulties, it was an essential element of the German war economy. By the end of the war approximately two million foreign workers made up of both POWs and civilians were serving the needs of the German war economy. As such, they were a “virtually indispensable” part of Germany’s overall war effort.

Following the end of the war, efforts were made to repatriate both POWs and civilian foreign workers to make room for returning German soldiers. Germany’s ravaged economy also required far fewer foreign workers. Indeed, the postwar era marked a spike in emigration, as German workers fled a tight job market, hyperinflation, and socio-political instability. The decline of foreign labor in the interwar period was also due to the loss of agricultural lands in the east and the shift to corporatist economic relations under the Weimar Republic.

The shift to a more “organized” form of capitalism with origins in the war economy would have profound effects on German migration policy. Whereas controls on residency were directed almost exclusively against foreign Poles during the Imperial era, under the Weimar Republic they were expanded to encompass all foreign workers regardless of their nationality. The point was to enhance the standing of domestic workers vis-à-vis foreign competitors, thereby safeguarding the formers’ interests. This reflected the increased power of organized labor under the Weimar constitution. Formal preference in hiring was granted to German workers and foreign labor was reserved for only those cases were domestic sources were unavailable. Furthermore, foreign workers were to be paid at the same rates as German workers, thereby guarding against the use of foreign labor to undercut domestic wage rates. Finally, the admission of foreign workers was to be regulated by committees made up of representatives of both employers and organized labor. The Labor Exchange Act (Arbeitnachweisgesetz)
of 1922 formalized these new approaches to the regulation of foreign labor. Responsibility for recruitment and supervision of foreign laborers was centralized in the German Labor Agency and the Reich Employment Office (Reichsamt für Arbeitsvermittlung), respectively. The duration of work and residency permits was strictly limited to a maximum of twelve months for all foreign workers, except those who had established a long-term presence in Germany and therefore qualified for a “permanent visa” (Befreiungsscheine).145 Taken together, these regulations allowed for the flexible use of foreign labor to meet particular economic needs.

The RuStAG of 1913 remained the law of the land concerning citizenship and, despite some shifting positions on naturalization practices across the Länder, the aim of barring the naturalization of “foreigners of alien descent” persisted. There were calls for the reorientation of naturalization by Prussian officials, which reflected the influence of Social Democrats in the state’s government. Demands included replacing the principle of descent with a principle of cultural affinity so that immigrants who identified as Germans, spoke German, and displayed German cultural habits might be considered for naturalization once residency requirements and other criteria (such as potential for military and/or economic service) were satisfied. This and other proposals met with vociferous opposition, led in the main by Bavarian state representatives. For critics of the Prussian reform line, culture was simply too imprecise a category: conservatives claimed that ambitious foreigners were adept at mimicking German cultural habits in their efforts to further their selfish commercial and economic interests.146 Cultural affinity, as measured through language use or particular habits, simply could not take the place of descent in terms of defining German nationality. In the words of the Bavarian Foreign Minister: “It cannot be concluded that the Eastern Jew somehow bears an affinity to German nationality on the basis of their use of the German language.”147

For the Bavarian Foreign Minister, the simple fact that one was an Eastern Jew was enough to eliminate any possibility for “true” acculturation and incorporation into the German Volk. This position reflected the growing influence of the “new anti-Semitism” in Weimar-era Germany. The melding of scientific racism and traditional anti-Semitism that had begun at the turn of the century was taken several steps further during the interwar years, resulting in a scientifically sanctioned view of the nation as constituting a biologized racial category, threatened by “contamination” from “culturally distant foreigners.” Under such a worldview, the “assimilability” of Jews and other suspect races was rendered inconse-
sequent; no amount of assimilation could alter this essential fact.148

Thus, the boundary distinguishing Germans from non-Germans during the Weimar period took on a more radical character. The economic crash of 1929, the growing importance of “racial health” among public authorities, and the rejection of democratic and political principles by adherents of organic nationalism thwarted attempts to shift this line outward and helped ensure that the increasingly völkisch conception of German nationality that came to define popular and elite opinion in the last days of the Weimar Republic would reach its racist culmination under the Nazis.

Conclusion

Canada and Germany responded to the challenge of mass migration at the turn of the century in comparable ways, despite important differences in geographic location, regime type, national traditions, and immigration experiences. Both states constructed systems that aimed to exploit migration for economic and other requirements while blocking the entry and incorporation of groups deemed “unsuitable” with regard to the project of national integration. In Canada, this entailed the outright exclusion of “Asiatics,” Africans, and, by the end of the 1920s, most continental Europeans, particularly Jews. In Germany, an elaborate array of migration controls, residency requirements, and naturalization procedures allowed for the harnessing of international migration for economic purposes while simultaneously limiting migrants’ access to social incorporation and national membership. In both states, economic, political, and ideological factors, including ideas concerning the suitability of particular “races,” came together to influence specific responses to the immigration-membership dilemma. By the interwar period, each country’s respective policy regime had been elaborated and was set firmly in place.

The economic crash of 1929 would effectively halt migration to both Canada and Germany. Canada ceased being an “immigration country” and mass deportations were used to get rid of economically burdensome and potentially threatening foreigners.149 In Germany, the Depression helped boost the fortunes of Hitler’s National Socialist Workers Party and the Nazis seized power and effectively ended the Weimar Republic’s democratic experiment in 1933. Whereas Jews had faced harsh discrimination in migration and naturalization policies during both the Imperial and Weimar eras, they were now subject to a fundamentally different kind of prejudice whereby even those who already enjoyed the relative security of German citizenship were threatened. The undermining
of the legal position of German Jews, which culminated in the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in July 1935, codified what had been state-sponsored illegality and oppression in a new, racist legal order.150 The terror visited upon Germany’s Jews on the evening of November 9, 1938 – the “night of broken glass” (Kristallnacht) – spelled out the Nazi’s intentions: to drive out German Jews by whatever means necessary. As Göring noted in the wake of the event, Kristallnacht made it clear to the world that “the Jew cannot live in Germany.”151

If the Nazis’ persecution and expulsion of Jews marked a pathological turn in German anti-Semitism, Canada’s response to the refugees’ plight illustrated the degree to which restrictive immigration controls oriented state policies. In the words of Irving Abella and Harold Troper, “the single-mindedness with which the Nazi’s murdered the vast majority of European Jews was seemingly matched by the determination of Canada to keep out these same people.”152 Abella and Troper’s detailed account of Canada’s conduct in the face of the mass flight of European Jews makes clear that the Depression afforded Canadian government officials “a dramatic opportunity to complete [the] process of restriction begun in the boom years of the 1920s.”153 European Jews had long been considered “incorrigibly urban” by immigration officials and were therefore deemed unsuitable for work on farms, the only occupation open to would-be migrants during the Depression era. Given that Order-in-Council PC 659 (1930) effectively banned all non-agricultural workers who were of non-American or non-British stock, Canada effectively shut itself off from the rest of the world. “[F]or the remainder of the decade – and indeed beyond – a determined Canadian government fought every attempt by the wretched European refugees to breach this protective wall of orders-in-council.”154

The legacy of Germany’s persecution of European Jews and Canada other states’ gross indifference to their plight would have a tremendous impact on normative standards in the post-WWII era. The terrible excesses prompted by racist thinking and its related policies would help alter prevailing normative standards among states claiming the status of liberal democracies. Even so, both Canada and (West) Germany revisited their earlier responses to the migration-membership dilemma when faced with the renewal of mass migration in the postwar period. And while the rise of human rights and consequent transformation of liberalism would come to discredit the discursive grammar of race and extreme nationalism and create new space for differing immigration and citizenship polices in the postwar period, the unraveling of prewar regimes would prove to be a difficult, time consuming process.
Thus, the importance of both countries’ initial attempts to regulate community would have important long-term consequences that extended far beyond their period of enactment.

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Notes

1 The term “globalization” refers to a set of processes that embody a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transaction, “generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power.... (F)lows refer to the movements of physical artifacts, people, symbols, tokens and information across space and time, while networks refer to regularized or patterned interactions between independent agents, nodes of activity, or sites of power.” David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): 16.

2 The notion of a “double movement” is drawn from Karl Polanyi’s The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

3 Speaking to this point, Hannah Arendt noted that “there was hardly a country left on the Continent that did not pass between the two wars some new legislation which... was always phrased to allow for getting rid of great numbers of its inhabitants at any opportune moment.” The Origins of Totalitarianism, Third Edition, Revised (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968): 279. When one factors in legislation aimed at barring the entry of unwanted groups in Britain and the “New World,” Arendt’s claim takes on a global scope.


7 Ibid.


16 Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 294. For a contemporary view see P. C. Campbell, Chinese Coolie Emigration (London: King and Son, 1923).


21 E. J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 107. Michael Mann notes that “Increasing social density, state infrastructures, and linguistic and sometimes also religious community gave racism a national definition.... Ideologists for the Anglo-Saxon, the
Frank, the Teuton, the Slav ‘race’ developed a mythological history of common descent. In the 1900s, British politicians and popular writers used the word ‘race’ in a perfectly routine way to refer to the British people, in discussing the problems of the Empire, and in regard to economic rivalry with Germany – even with the United States. Thus racism was not unitary but split, as Europe had always been split, between the transnational and the national.” Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, VOL II: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 581–582.


26 Ibid.


28 Although total exclusion was of course the aim of policy in periods of profound economic dislocation – i.e. the Great Depression.


35 Kelley and Trebilcock, The Making of the Mosaic, 44.

36 Cited in Morton, The Canadian Identity, 44.

37 Kelley and Trebilcock, The Making of the Mosaic, 45–47.


43 Ibid., 38.


45 The Immigration Program, 6.

46 The decision to allow “block settlements” made Canada an attractive destination for German and Russian Mennonites and Russian Doukhobors.


59 Ibid.
60 These included a 1908 Order-in-Council barring immigrants whose passage was financed by a charitable society in their home country, unless the charity was approved and recognized by the Canadian government, and another requiring that immigrants entering Canada arrive via continuous voyage from the country of their birth or citizenship with tickets bought in those same countries. The first regulation aimed at checking the flow of British “paupers” whose passage to Canada was assisted by British municipalities eager to “off-load” their poor. The second was aimed at barring the entry of Japanese and East Asian immigrants and arose in response to growing anti-Asian sentiment in British Columbia, which exploded in the 1907 Vancouver Riot. Mabel Timlin, “Canada’s Immigration Policy, 1896–1910,” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* VOL. 26, No. 4 (November 1960): 523–528.
62 Ibid., 139.
63 Whittaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy since Confederation*, 9.
67 For details concerning the riot see Ward, *White Canada Forever*, 53–78.
68 The Order-in-Council was drafted in response to a slight increase in the number of black American settlers in the Prairie Provinces. According


70 H. F. Angus, “The Legal Status in British Columbia of Residents of Oriental Race and their Descendants” *The Canadian Bar Review* VOL. 9, No. 1 (January 1931): 10. Requirements for naturalization included: five years residence, or five years service to the Crown; an intention to continue to reside in Canada or serve the Crown; good character; a knowledge of English or French. The grant of citizenship lay within the absolute discretion of the Secretary of State. Reasons for rejection were not required and appeal was impossible.


77 Cited in Hawkins, *Critical Years in Immigration*, 17.

78 Ibid., 19–20.


81 Reflecting on the impact of policy on Canada’s development, a Canadian immigration official noted that the maintenance of an overwhelmingly white society was due “in no small measure to the immigration policy that has been pursued for years. The immigration regulations reflect the immigration policy and while there is not what one would call a colour line, there is something that comes very close to a race line.” Letter from Birks, Ottawa, April 8, 1942. National Archives of Canada, Box RG 76, VOL. 338, File 553-36-644, Pts. 1–8 “Admission of Coloured Domestics from BWI. Policy and Instructions.”


83 Klaus J. Bade, “German Emigration to the United States and Continental Immigration to Germany in the Late Nineteenth and


95 Ibid, 17.


98 The period was subsequently lengthened.


101 Herbert, A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 28.

102 Ibid, 32–34.


104 Herbert, A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 34–35.

105 Ibid, 36.


107 Forsberg, “Foreign Labour, the State and Trade Unions,” 113.

108 Bade, “Labour, Migration, and the State,” 64.


113 Schönwälder, “Invited but Unwanted?” 206.


115 “Die Ausländergefahr im Deutschen Reich,” Alldeutscher Blätter No. 45 (1907); cited in Herbert, A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 28–29.

116 Herbert, A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 29.

117 Forsberg, “Foreign Labour, the State and Trade Unions,” 118.

118 Proceeding of the Sixth Congress of Labor Exchanges (Breslau, 1910): 168; cited in Herbert, A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 49.


123 See Ingo Blank, “... nirgends eine Heimat, aber Gräber auf jedem Friedhof: Ostjuden in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik,” in *Deutsche im Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland*, 325–326. Approximately 78,000 East European Jews remained in Germany on the eve of WWI. They constituted about 12 per cent of the total Jewish population. Bade, “Immigration, Naturalization, and Ethno-National Traditions in Germany,” 34.


126 Wertheimer, “The Unwanted Element’,” 511.

127 Ibid, 512.

128 Ibid, 512.

129 Ibid, 512.


Workers from captured territories (e.g. Belgium) were also “recruited” for the war effort by German authorities. See Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany*, 102–108.

German was host to approximately 1 million civilian foreign workers at the end of the war. By 1924 this figure declined to 124,000. See Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany*, 121.


> It is hardly imaginable that anyone should think that a German could be made out of, say, a Negro or a Chinaman, because he has learned German and is ready to talk it for the rest of his life, and to vote for some German political party. The process would mean a beginning of the bastardization of our race. . . . Since nationality, or rather race, is not a matter of language, but of blood, it would be possible to talk about Germanization only if the process could alter the nature of the blood of the person subjected to it. . . . Whenever foreign blood has been introduced into the body of a nation, its unhappy effect has been to break up our national character.


Ibid, 5.