

National Identity and Welfare Nationalism: Migration, Citizenship, and Social Policy

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Abstract. *The future course of the welfare state in the context of global capitalism's expansion is a subject of intense academic debate, with significant scrutiny focused on its trajectory amid globalization. This discourse encompasses inquiries into the economic prerequisites for and ramifications of the welfare state, as well as its alignment with economic competitiveness and political legitimacy. Particularly prominent is the issue of political legitimacy, focusing on the welfare state's ability to foster social cohesion and ensure democratic governance, given challenges posed by immigration, anti-immigration sentiments, and evolving social risks. These challenges have highlighted a dichotomy within Western European societies, emphasizing distinctions between natives and immigrants based on their positioning within the labor market. Despite migrants' potential contributions, their reception and integration into destination countries' social fabric are often hindered by welfare nationalism and concerns regarding declining welfare standards. This nationalism manifests in welfare exclusionism and chauvinism, fueling calls to restrict migrant benefits. Conversely, welfare state ideologies rooted in egalitarian principles serve as a counterbalance to exclusionary demands, shaping debates on migrants' entitlement to welfare benefits. Against this backdrop, this study aims to elucidate the intricate interplay between pragmatic and nationalist/exclusionary perspectives within the discourse of welfare nationalism. It seeks to achieve this by examining the nexus between welfare rights, national identity formation, the welfare state crisis, and migrants' positioning within the labor market. Through enriching this debate, the study endeavors to contribute to a deeper understanding of the future trajectory of welfare states characterized by significant migrant populations.*

Keywords: *Welfare nationalism, immigrants, welfare chauvinism, national identity, welfare benefits.*

Introduction

The discourse surrounding the trajectory of the welfare state within the framework of globalized capitalism has been a subject of intense scrutiny since the 1980s (e.g., Navarro, 2001; Chorbajian, 2021; Navarro, 2007; Palley, 2020). Central to this discourse are inquiries into the economic prerequisites for and ramifications of the welfare state, its economic viability, and its alignment with the imperatives of economic competitiveness. However, alongside these considerations, the issue of political legitimacy pertaining to the welfare state has risen to prominence. Questions regarding the welfare state's capacity to engender social cohesion and ensure the legitimacy of democratic governance have come under scrutiny, particularly in light of challenges posed by immigration, anti-immigration sentiments, and emergent social risks associated with evolving life trajectories, familial structures, and modes of employment (Chung et al., 2018; Laenen et al., 2020).

In his seminal work *Birds of Passage* published in 1979, Michael J. Piore cogently delineated a dichotomy within Western European societies, demarcating natives from immigrants based on their positioning within the labor market. Unlike contemporary migration phenomena, Piore argued that immigration to Western democracies primarily stemmed from demand-side factors. He contended that economic immigration persisted due to the reluctance of native workers in Western economies to undertake jobs typified by low social standing, meager wages, and limited prospects for advancement. Immigrants admitted through guest worker programs were thus perceived as optimal candidates to fulfill these roles.

However, despite the potential for tangible contributions, the reception of migrants within destination countries, and their integration into the social fabric on equitable terms with the native populace, is often fraught with challenges. This stems from the native population's perception of welfare entitlements as a privilege, leading to apprehension regarding their redistribution to immigrants and fostering a sentiment of welfare nationalism. This welfare nationalism manifests in the populace's inclination towards welfare exclusionism and chauvinism, reflecting concerns over the potential diminution of their own welfare standards.

The influence of nationalism on welfare states is also discernible in prevalent methodologies within welfare state research. Since the 1990s, comparative analyses of welfare models, welfare regimes, or varieties of welfare capitalism have gained traction (e.g., Aspalter, 2023; Amelung and Schefold, 2021; Baranowski and Jabkowski, 2022; Geva-May et al., 2020). Although these studies, epitomized by Esping-Andersen's seminal work in 1990, depart from singular national contexts, the typologies they construct are idealized representations of national societies. This form of comparativism encapsulates a form of methodological nationalism, wherein the paradigmatic framework of nation-states and national societies is presupposed rather than critically interrogated as part of the research problem.

While debates within this framework diverge in their interpretations of the welfare state's roles and significance, they commonly underscore the transnational mobility of capital and labor as quintessential national concerns. A recent manifestation of this discourse is evident in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis and the concurrent surge in support for right-wing populist movements across Europe. This period witnessed a proliferation of public narratives portraying migrants as an economic burden and attributing rising welfare costs to their presence. Such rhetoric, although championed by populist and extremist factions, has also found resonance among mainstream political actors, thereby permeating the public discourse. Given the welfare state's pivotal role in shaping national identities, this rhetoric has precipitated welfare chauvinist demands for curtailing migrant benefits.

Conversely, egalitarian principles constitute a cornerstone of welfare state ideologies, countervailing demands for the exclusion of migrants from welfare entitlements. Consequently, there exists a pressing imperative to scrutinize the dynamics and discourses surrounding the welfare state, immigration, and social benefits within specific historical contexts. This dichotomy underscores the tension between a pragmatic perspective, which advocates for the utilization of migrants in the labor market while advocating for restricted welfare rights, and a human rights-based approach, which upholds the inviolability of social security and protection as fundamental human rights.

Indeed, the debate concerning immigrants' entitlement to equal welfare rights constitutes a subset of the broader discourse surrounding the welfare state's future. Since the 1980s, discussions pertaining to the welfare state's sustainability, economic competitiveness, and political legitimacy have underscored the role of welfare nationalism as a salient argument (e.g., Amelung and Schefold, 2021; Baranowski and Jabkowski, 2022; Chorbajian, 2021; Navarro, 2007). This confluence of perspectives underscores the intricate interplay between pragmatist and nationalist/exclusionist viewpoints within the discourse on welfare nationalism. By examining the nexus between welfare rights, national identity formation, the welfare state crisis, and migrants' positioning within the labor market, this study endeavors to elucidate the symbiotic relationship between pragmatic and nationalist/exclusionist stances. In doing so, it aims to enrich the ongoing debate concerning the future trajectory of welfare states characterized by significant migrant populations.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive analysis of these interrelated factors, shedding light on the complex dynamics shaping the future trajectory of welfare states characterized by significant migrant populations. It also aims to improve our understanding of welfare nationalism and its implications for contemporary socio-political debates through intensive theoretical comparisons.

Welfare State and the National Identity

The historical interplay between migration control and the welfare state in Europe, as well as intraregional dynamics, elucidates a complex narrative deeply intertwined with evolving societal contexts. While welfare universalism once flourished alongside efforts towards debordering and the ascendance of international law, a restrictive trend in migration control since the 1990s, particularly in response to heightened migration from the Global South to the Global North, has eroded the foundations of welfare universalism. In contemporary discourses surrounding immigration and the welfare state, concepts of national heritage, historical narratives, and self-perceptions serve as reservoirs for articulating and reshaping societal imaginaries. Despite the prevalence of economic discourse, considerations of national belonging evoke cultural and identity-related deliberations.

Nationalism, functioning as both an ideational construct and a practical mechanism for establishing nation-based political orders, has exerted a profound influence on the formation and evolution of the welfare state, shaping national identities, solidarities, and conceptions of citizenship and democracy, effectively ‘nationalizing the citizenry’ (Rokkan, 1999 [1966], p. 265).

Scholarship on nationalism encompasses diverse perspectives. While some emphasize nationalism as an authentic manifestation of cultural and historical belonging (Kaldor, 2004), others perceive it as a deliberate political instrument intertwined with nation-building endeavors, often involving the transformation or construction of cultural identities (Gellner, 1983).

T.H. Marshall (1950) posited that the expansion of the welfare state in the 20th century was rooted in a shared national identity and reciprocal obligations among citizens. However, in the contemporary ‘Age of Migration’ (Castles and Miller, 2003), characterized by significant waves of immigration, the focus has shifted towards acknowledging ‘difference’ rather than ‘sameness,’ resulting in diminished support for redistributive policies, particularly towards minority ‘outsider’ groups (e.g., Soroka et al., 2006).

Empirical investigations into this realm offer nuanced insights. Johnston et al. (2010) discovered a multifaceted positive correlation between national identity and welfare provision support within the Canadian context, while Shayo’s (2009) research unveiled a robust negative association between national pride and endorsement of measures aimed at reducing income inequality, underscoring the complexities inherent in these dynamics.

Beyond traditional political theory, studies grounded in social identity theory suggest that nurturing a shared identity fosters prioritization of group welfare over individual interests (Kramer and Brewer, 1984). Moreover, research indicates that individuals demonstrate heightened empathy and engage in ‘helping behavior’ towards

members of their in-group (e.g., Theiss-Morse, 2009), while a strong overarching identity mitigates intergroup competition (e.g., Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000; Transue, 2007).

Nonetheless, the notion of a common shared identity as a cohesive societal force resonates across diverse scholarly viewpoints. Scholars such as David Miller contend that nations serve as ‘ethical communities,’ implying obligations towards fellow nationals irrespective of their backgrounds (Miller, 1995; Kymlicka, 2001). Without these national bonds, the impetus for reciprocal interaction and redistribution towards unfamiliar ‘others’ diminishes.

Conceptual Confusion; Welfare Nationalism, Welfare Chauvinism and Welfare Exclusionism

Throughout history, the consolidation of the nation-state has hinged upon the extension of social rights to its citizens, while outsiders, namely migrants, have been excluded from such entitlements, delineating the development of citizenship rights. Consequently, migrants pose a fundamental challenge to the exclusionary nature of the welfare state (Rosenhek, 2000, p. 49). The welfare state has long served as a principal mechanism through which states cultivate and uphold the allegiance of their populace, deriving substance from conferring entitlements exclusively to citizens (Joppke, 1999, p. 23). Broadly construed, both economic and sociological scholarship conceptualize immigrants as a threat to the sustainability of generous welfare states (Van Oorschot, 2008).

Europe has witnessed a surge in immigration in recent decades, inciting public and political discourse concerning immigrant integration, including their access to social security systems. Concurrently, a prevalent anti-immigrant narrative suggests that immigrants are free-riders who benefit from social welfare without adequate contribution. Welfare chauvinism, within the context of immigration, perpetuates this notion, asserting that access to welfare state provisions should be reserved for native-born citizens. At its core, welfare chauvinism revolves around the perception and justification of group-based social inequality.

The term *welfare chauvinism* emerged from studies aimed at elucidating the unconventional stance of political parties that, while advocating for extensive welfare state measures akin to left-leaning parties in the market-state dimension, adopt conservative-authoritarian positions in the sociocultural dimension by advocating for the dominance of national culture—a stance often grounded in nativist arguments positing cultural incompatibility. Larsen (2020) argues that welfare chauvinism carries negative connotations, thus advocating for the term welfare nationalism instead. Other scholars describe this phenomenon using terms such as *welfare restrictiveness* (Degen, Kuhn, & van der Brug, 2019), *exclusive solidarity* (Lefkofridi & Michel, 2017), or *selective solidarity* (Koning, 2013; Magni, 2021).

Welfare nationalism, synonymous with welfare chauvinism, entails the preservation of welfare benefits exclusively for nationals, predicated on ethnic belonging and contribution to the community. This perspective underscores a stark differentiation between “our own” and migrants concerning welfare entitlements, emerging when a significant segment of the populace perceives migrants as less deserving of welfare benefits than the native population, advocating that migrants should earn such benefits through employment or citizenship. This intersects with collective apprehensions regarding societal well-being, rooted in group identities encompassing factors like class, ethnicity, or nationality. Nevertheless, disparities between individual and collective concerns engender varying degrees of welfare nationalism across different societal segments, with empirical studies revealing notable variances across Europe, with Scandinavian regions generally evincing more inclusive attitudes towards immigrants compared to Central and Eastern European (CEE) counterparts.

Welfare exclusionism, stemming from a similar vein, entails the belief that granting immigrants access to social benefits should be curtailed, constituting a genuine expression of anti-immigrant sentiments (Reeskens & Van Oorschot, 2012). It embodies support for excluding immigrants from social service rights.

Empirical studies exploring attitudes towards immigrants unveil a nuanced relationship between actual immigration levels and public sentiment. Strikingly, cross-national research has not directly correlated welfare nationalism with the proportion of foreigners within a country. Even regional disparities in immigrant distribution have shown a negative correlation with opposition to their social rights. Nevertheless, significant events, such as the influx of refugees into Europe due to Middle Eastern conflicts, can sway public opinion and catalyze debates on immigration.

Distinguishing between welfare nationalism, welfare chauvinism, and welfare exclusionism is paramount for comprehending contemporary political dynamics. Welfare nationalism interweaves welfare provision with national identity, framing immigration discussions within a national and economic paradigm. This perspective aligns with the commitment to national welfare interests and ideals, as articulated by Suszycki (2011). Conversely, welfare chauvinism advocates for welfare provision exclusively for the native population, often relying on exclusionary and racialized criteria, frequently embraced by right-wing populist parties. Lastly, welfare exclusionism entails ideologies wherein welfare benefits are denied or contingent upon conditions for migrants and their descendants, prioritizing national interests over cultural identity in exclusionary determinations.

Nationalist Responses to Welfare Issues

Contemporary discourse on immigration is characterized by multifaceted concerns, predominantly economic and cultural, which fuel anti-immigration prejudices. Scholarship reveals that migration’s economic impact on recipient countries primarily

manifests through labor market adjustments. The influx of foreign workers expands the labor supply, precipitating shifts in relative returns within the labor market. Notably, low-skilled immigrants often exert downward pressure on wages for native counterparts, eliciting opposition to migration-friendly policies (Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). However, while labor market competition theories hold intuitive appeal, they often inadequately explicate public sentiment towards migration. Empirical evidence remains scant on the significance of factors such as skills, unemployment rates, or GDP per capita in shaping attitudes towards immigrants and refugees, both intra-nationally and across borders (Card, 2005).

Additionally, concerns regarding economic losses due to immigration extend to reductions in welfare benefits, intricately intertwined with notions of group identity and belonging. Immigration complicates the delicate fabric of the welfare state, challenging conventional perceptions of deservingness and entitlements (Bommes & Geddes, 2000). The emergence of welfare nationalism seeks to reconcile citizens' views on welfare state access and immigration preferences, often materializing as restrictions on welfare benefits for noncitizens (Heizmann, Jedinger, & Perry, 2018). This phenomenon underscores a broader discourse on state responsibilities in disbursing welfare benefits to noncitizens and underscores the intersectionality of national identity, social rights, and obligations.

Concurrently, cultural anxieties linked to migration revolve around the fear of the unfamiliar and resistance to assimilating new beliefs and customs. Perceived disparities in values, norms, and beliefs between immigrant and native groups often foster prejudices and advocate for anti-immigration policies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). These anxieties are exacerbated when perceived social distance from immigrant groups is high, potentially bolstering group cohesion and exploitation of such sentiments by political actors. However, the distinction between realistic and symbolic threats related to migration, and their impact on societal attitudes, remains subject to limited empirical inquiry, complicating our understanding of sociotropic considerations in shaping migration attitudes (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014).

While scholarship on welfare nationalism continues to expand, its cross-country examination presents challenges. The perception of immigrants' deservingness, framed along national identity criteria and nonidentity criteria such as need or work ethic, poses conceptual dilemmas. Nonetheless, welfare nationalism appears significantly influenced by individual-level factors, including perceived competition between natives and immigrants for scarce social benefits (Kootstra, 2016; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2012). Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, such as unskilled workers and the unemployed, are more likely to exhibit higher levels of welfare nationalism, driven by fears of heightened competition for limited resources. Conversely, more affluent groups may demonstrate greater openness to immigration and social rights for immigrants.

Moreover, changes in European welfare states are shaped by both regional integration efforts and national responses to increased cross-border movements. While

endeavors are made to attract global talent, migration-related challenges are often framed as security threats, prompting policy measures aimed at controlling undesirable migration (Emmenegger & Careja, 2012). This dynamic landscape underscores the evolving nature of nationalism in the era of globalization, where it serves as both a call for protectionism and a lens for understanding the complexities of nationhood in a globalized milieu (Calhoun, 2007; Smith, 1998).

Policies aimed at controlling immigration, such as family reunification criteria and deportation measures, reflect shifting norms of family dependency and economic self-sufficiency, contributing to hierarchical structures in welfare benefit allocation. Additionally, perceptions of migrants seeking social benefits often precipitate the implementation of policies aimed at reducing immigration flows and erecting barriers to entry (Emmenegger & Careja, 2012). These policies, driven by nationalist sentiments, often garner support from voters who perceive immigrants as outsiders undeserving of social benefits originally intended for citizens of nation-states.

However, this stance betrays a hypocritical attitude towards migrants, exploiting their labor while denying them social security and welfare benefits. The justification for this dissonance lies in the perceived elevation of migrants' welfare levels compared to their circumstances in their home countries. This narrative reinforces the perception of migrants as contributors to national prosperity while perpetuating a social consensus wherein both native citizens and migrants ostensibly benefit.

In conclusion, the intricate interplay of economic, cultural, and nationalist factors shapes attitudes towards immigration and welfare across Europe. While economic anxieties revolve around labor market competition and welfare benefits, cultural anxieties hinge on perceptions of social cohesion and identity. Welfare nationalism emerges as a response to these anxieties, reflecting both individual-level concerns about resource competition and collective concerns about societal well-being. As European welfare states grapple with the challenges of globalization and migration, nationalist sentiments continue to influence policy responses, reflecting evolving conceptions of nationhood and collective identity in an increasingly globalized world.

The “Other” Dualization of Labor Markets

Since the 1970s, discourse on labor market segmentation has been characterized by two primary positions. Efficiency-driven explanations interpret segmentation as the outcome of managerial strategies geared towards maximizing efficiency, with the ‘core-periphery’ divide reflecting workforce productivity and production needs (Doeringer & Piore, 1971). Conversely, power-based approaches posit that segmentation stems from political processes rather than efficiency-seeking strategies. According to these perspectives, labor market segmentation is a bargaining outcome shaped by the power balance between labor and management (Grimshaw & Rubery, 1998).

In recent decades, discussions on labor market reforms in Europe have frequently underscored the insider–outsider or primary and secondary labor markets dichotomy. Rooted in insider–outsider dynamics literature, this discourse highlights labor market dualization, where insiders enjoy representation and dismissal protection. Flexible arrangements for workers are often positioned as a protective measure, shielding the regular/permanent workforce from economic fluctuations (Piore, 1980: 24). According to Piore, labor market dualism arises when certain segments of the workforce are shielded from demand fluctuations, resulting in stable employment relationships and higher wages for primary market workers, while secondary market workers bear the brunt of economic adjustments.

The multifaceted dynamics shaping the division of workers into primary and secondary labor markets are intricate. Workers possessing specialized skills, valued for their scarcity and difficulty of replacement, typically enjoy better pay, job security, and career prospects compared to their easily replaceable counterparts. Simultaneously, immigrants, often marginalized by governmental policies favoring influential societal groups, frequently find themselves excluded from primary labor market opportunities (Emmenegger et al., 2012). These labor market conditions, which are often linked to skill levels, also manifest independently of qualifications, particularly among migrants. Consequently, migrants may find themselves relegated to secondary markets due to nationalist and protectionist reflexes, often encountering unequal treatment in social security systems.

Terms such as outsiders, the underclass, the working poor, the socially excluded, and the disadvantaged all signify a central characteristic of postindustrial societies: the exacerbation of inequalities and the emergence of a segment of individuals vulnerable to enduring marginalization in both the labor market and broader social spheres. This phenomenon is not arbitrary but is deeply influenced by a complex interplay of economic, political, and social factors.

Within Western economies, immigrants are relied upon not only due to labor shortages or their willingness to accept low wages but also because they often fill positions that native workers are reluctant to undertake (Piore, 1979). These positions, typically characterized by low pay and limited advancement opportunities, constitute the secondary labor market, contrasting with the primary labor market known for its superior pay, job security, and career prospects. Mobility between these two segments is often constrained, trapping workers within the secondary market.

In conclusion, whether articulated as insider–outsider dynamics or primary–secondary labor markets, this process of dualization can be understood as a globally emerging class divide, as evidenced by Standing’s (2011) distinction between the ‘salariat’ and the ‘precariat.’ Sociological analysis of segmentation processes necessitates careful consideration of how dualization varies across social contexts. Dualization is not solely linked to employment status but also intersects with socio-demographic and firm-level structural features. The over-representation of migrants and women in

nonstandard employment may help explain the disadvantages faced by nonstandard employees. Moreover, national-level variables, such as welfare regimes, influence the form of dualization, as seen in the case of female work (Vosko, 2010). According to Häusermann and Schwander (2012), the likelihood of being an outsider also depends on a country's welfare regime: in terms of gender and class, women in low-skilled service occupations are most likely to be outsiders, while youth are negatively affected only in some regimes. Additionally, immigrants are over-represented in unemployment and atypical work in most countries (Emmenegger & Careja, 2012; Raess & Burgoon, 2013). At the firm level, flexible work arrangements such as temporary and agency labor are utilized to respond to sector-specific demand volatility and international market pressures.

The Main Dilemma; Nationalism vs Need for Migrant Workers

The ongoing processes of globalization are fundamentally reshaping nationalism and employment dynamics on a global scale. The significant increase in international migrations is fostering diversity within the populations of many countries, leading to substantial shifts in national cultures and identities. These transformations are expected to have profound implications for employment policies and conventional understandings of citizenship and welfare ownership.

Traditionally, the concept of the nation-state has been closely intertwined with ethnicity and political identity. The nation is commonly perceived as a community bound together by shared language, culture, traditions, and history, often emphasizing ethnic cohesion. In contrast, the state is defined as a political entity delineated by territorial boundaries, often aligned with ethnic lines and purportedly reflecting the political values of the nation. However, the model of the nation-state is facing challenges in addressing the increasing phenomena of migration and cultural diversity driven by globalization.

The rights and access to social and economic resources of migrants are intricately determined at the intersection of migration governance and welfare governance. The regulation of migration and migrants' welfare is closely intertwined, contingent on various factors (Ataç and Rosenberger, 2019; Mayblin, 2019).

Differential exclusion characterizes a scenario where immigrants are integrated into specific sectors of society, particularly the labor market, while being excluded from accessing other domains such as welfare systems, citizenship, and political participation. Despite participating in civil society through work, taxation, or parenthood, immigrants do not automatically attain full citizenship rights within the nation-state. Exclusion mechanisms, whether legal or informal, often lead to immigrants becoming marginalized ethnic minorities, facing social and economic disadvantages rooted in class and ethnic background.

Recognition of the significance of migrant workers extends beyond their role as *international talent* to addressing demographic challenges posed by aging societies. Employers frequently exploit the opportunity to reduce labor costs by hiring lower-paid migrants, especially in sectors critical to Western economies, such as care provision within the welfare state.

Nationalist sentiments, underlying discrimination against migrant workers, can originate from both the indigenous population and government policies, indirectly reflecting nationalist agendas. For example, European governments, responding to the 1973 oil price crisis, adjusted their immigration policies, favoring restrictions on economic immigration in preference for asylum seekers and family reunification for existing immigrants (Geddes, 2003). Despite attempts to curb low-skilled immigration through welfare discrimination and nationalist rhetoric, the influx of low-skilled migrants persists, challenging assertions of zero immigration (Favell and Hansen, 2002).

In conclusion, while the economy demands both low- and high-skilled workers, public sentiment often leans towards immigration restrictions and limiting immigrants' access to social benefits. Governments, unable to revive traditional guest worker programs, strive to navigate this tension by categorizing immigrants into preferred and less preferred groups, crafting tailored policies accordingly.

Conclusion

Nationalism has been a significant force in shaping the welfare state, both conceptually and practically, by serving as a foundation for the establishment and validation of nation-centered political structures. Conversely, the evolution of the welfare state has also impacted nationalism by altering conceptions of national identity, citizenship, and democracy within the framework of the nation-state. The emergence of globalization has introduced new dynamics that influence nationalism, particularly concerning the welfare state's role in fostering social cohesion and maintaining democratic governance amidst challenges such as migration, anti-immigration sentiments, and emerging social risks.

Scholarly examinations have frequently highlighted the reluctance of native workers in Western economies to engage in jobs characterized by low social status, inadequate wages, and limited prospects for advancement in society. Consequently, there have been arguments in favor of continued economic migration, particularly to fill these positions. However, despite the potential contributions of migrants, they often encounter obstacles in their acceptance and integration into destination countries' social fabric alongside the native population. This stems from perceptions among the native populace regarding welfare entitlements as a privilege, leading to apprehensions about the redistribution of these entitlements to migrants and fostering sentiments of welfare

nationalism. Such nationalism often manifests as welfare exclusionism and chauvinism, reflecting concerns about the potential erosion of their own welfare standards.

While there exist diverse interpretations of the welfare state's role and significance, there is a common acknowledgment that the transnational mobility of capital and labor is a central concern for nations. Following the 2008 economic crisis, there has been a rise in support for right-wing populist movements across Europe, accompanied by public discourses portraying migrants as an economic burden. These narratives, although advocated by extremist factions, have found resonance among mainstream political actors, permeating public discourse and fueling demands to curtail benefits for migrants.

Conversely, egalitarian principles constitute the foundation of welfare state ideologies, countering calls for the exclusion of migrants from welfare entitlements. Consequently, there is an urgent need to examine the dynamics and discourses surrounding the welfare state, migration, and social benefits within specific historical contexts. This dichotomy underscores the tension between a pragmatic perspective advocating for the restriction of welfare rights while endorsing the utilization of migrants in the labor market, and a human rights-based approach that upholds social security and protection as fundamental human rights.

The debate regarding equal welfare rights for immigrants is a subset of the broader discourse concerning the future of the welfare state. Discussions regarding the sustainability, economic competitiveness, and political legitimacy of the welfare state have emphasized the role of welfare nationalism as a significant argument. Concerns about social cohesion and democratic legitimacy in the face of migration, anti-immigration sentiments, and evolving social risks persist.

The intricate interplay between pragmatic and nationalist/exclusionary perspectives in the discourse of welfare nationalism highlights the urgency of investigating the nexus between welfare rights, national identity formation, the welfare state crisis, and the labor market position of migrants. Scholars exploring this relationship can significantly contribute to enriching the ongoing debate on the future trajectory of welfare states characterized by substantial migrant populations. Within this context, a dichotomy emerges between pragmatic and human rights-based perspectives on migrants' entitlements to welfare benefits. While the pragmatic view justifies lower welfare levels for migrants based on their perceived lesser contribution to the national social heritage, the human rights-based perspective contends that social security and protection are fundamental human rights that must not be curtailed based on migrant status. Consequently, there is a pressing imperative to analyze the dynamics and discourses surrounding the welfare state, immigration, and benefits within specific historical contexts.

In conclusion, ongoing processes of globalization are reshaping nationalism and employment dynamics worldwide, with profound implications for the welfare state.

While economic and cultural concerns fuel anti-immigration sentiments, the intersection of welfare nationalism, migration, and social benefits remains at the forefront of debates. As welfare states navigate the challenges of globalization and migration, nationalist sentiments continue to influence policy responses, reflecting evolving understandings of nationhood and collective identity in an increasingly globalized world. Policymakers' ability to convince the native population that immigrants can enhance, rather than diminish, their quality of life and welfare through their contributions to the labor market will be pivotal in shaping the future social consensus governing the welfare state.

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