
UNIT 19 EUROPEAN DIASPORA

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19.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the concept of European Diaspora.
- Comprehend the origin of the European Diaspora and the various waves of diaspora
- Get to know the trends in the study of European Diaspora in the 21st century and appreciate their Diasporic Linkages today.
- Familiarise yourself with possible Diaspora contributions.

19.2 INTRODUCTION

The concept of European emigration refers to successive waves of emigration from Europe to other continents. This resulted in the origins of the various European diasporas who left European nation-states or stateless ethnic communities on the European continent. Around 60 million people, mostly Europeans, emigrated from Europe to America, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Siberia, between 1815 and 1932. The populations in Africa and Asia experienced significant growth in their new environment, compared to what they previously experienced. World War I (which took place around 1914) altered this ethnic makeup of the globe to a large extent. Countries like Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and Russia account for most European immigrants.

However, when it comes to European Diaspora, there is a distinction to be made between imperial conquest and diaspora. Governments and elites carry out imperial conquest. They do it for the sake of power, money, and strategic advantage. The rest are members of a diaspora or people who have moved from one country to another.

19.3 CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN DIASPORA

Who/What is the European Diaspora?

The origins of the various European Diasporas can be traced to the people, who left the European nation states or stateless ethnic communities on the European continent. The first significant European immigration wave, spanning the 16th to 18th centuries, consisted mostly of settlers from the British Isles attracted by economic opportunity and religious freedom. These early immigrants were a mix of well-to-do individuals, Protestants from North-West Europe and indentured servants.

Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants arriving during the 1840s and 1850s made up the second wave of European immigration, fleeing famine, religious persecution, and political conflicts. Unlike the first Europeans, who were mostly Protestants, the new arrivals were overwhelmingly Catholic. They came from much poorer backgrounds and were younger and less skilled. After a pause in European immigration during the U.S. Civil War, more than 20 million immigrants arrived primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1920. Most Southern European immigrants were motivated by economic opportunity in the United States, while Eastern Europeans (primarily Jews) fled religious persecution. World War I slowed European immigration, and the national-origin quotas established in 1921 and 1924 which gave priority to Western and Northern Europeans coupled with the Great Depression and the onset of World War II brought immigration from Europe to a near halt.

Even though the 1965 Immigration Act did away with country quotas, by then fewer Europeans were seeking to cross the Atlantic either because their economic fortunes had improved during post war reconstruction or because their communist governments restricted emigration. The fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s ushered in the most recent wave of European immigration, dominated by people from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This wave continues till today due to modern reasons like armed conflicts, human rights abuses, economic opportunities etc (*Bauböck & Faist, Thomas 2010*).

19.4 FORMATION OF EUROPEAN DIASPORA

There are broadly three phases of European diaspora formation.

A. The First Wave

‘Early emigration’ and the Origin of European Diaspora

The European Diaspora consists of European people and their [descendants](#) who [emigrated](#) from [Europe](#). Emigration from [Europe](#) began on a large scale especially during the [Spanish Empire](#) in the 16th to 17th centuries (expansion of the [Hispanosphere](#)), the [British Empire](#) in the 17th to 19th centuries (expansion of the [Anglosphere](#)), the [Portuguese Empire](#) and the [Russian Empire](#) in the 19th century (expansion to [Central Asia](#) and the [Russian Far East](#)). While the absolute number of European emigrants during the [early modern period](#) was very small compared to later waves of migration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the relative size of these early modern migrations was nevertheless

substantial.

The European continent has been a central part of a complex [migration system](#), which included swaths of North Africa, the Middle East and [Asia Minor](#) well before the [Modern Era](#). Yet, only the population growth of the late [Middle Ages](#) allowed for larger population movements, inside and outside of the continent. The [discovery of the Americas](#) in 1492 stimulated a steady stream of voluntary migration from Europe. About 200,000 [Spaniards](#) settled in their American colonies prior to 1600, a small settlement compared to the 3 to 4 million [Amerindians](#) who lived in [Spanish territory in the Americas](#).

During the 1500s, Spain and Portugal sent a steady flow of *government* and church officials, members of the lesser *nobility*, people from the working classes and their families averaging roughly three-thousand people per year from a population of around eight million. The first wave occurred because Europe offered little economic opportunities other than the aristocracy and nobility. Average Europeans also looked for better rights in places like America as several refugees were created by occasional wars like English Civil Wars, French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.

For example, a total of around 437,000 left Spain in the 150-year period from 1500 to 1650 to *Central, South America* and the *Caribbean Islands*. Between 1500 and 1700 only 100,000 *Portuguese* crossed the Atlantic to settle in *Brazil*. However, with the discovery of numerous highly productive gold mines in the Minas Gerais region, the Portuguese emigration to Brazil increased five fold. From 1700 till 1760, over half a million Portuguese immigrants entered Brazil (Rainer & Faist 2010) With such steady flows by the end of the 16th century, the Spanish were established in St. Augustine, and by the early 17th century thriving communities dotted the landscape: the British in Virginia, the Dutch in New York and New Jersey, and the Swedish in Delaware.

During the 17th century, with the advent of ‘colonialism’ the landscape of European emigration changed. Half of the European immigrants to the [colonies](#) had been indentured servant or workers who had never been indentured, or whose indenture had expired. Free wage labour was more common for Europeans in the colonies. Christopher Tomlins estimates that 48% were indentured. About 75% were under the age of 25. The age of legal adulthood for men was 24 years; those over 24 generally came on contracts lasting about 3 years. Regarding the children who came, Gary Nash reports that, "many of the servants were actually nephews, nieces, cousins and children of friends of emigrating Englishmen, who paid their passage in return for their labour once in America (Nash 2014; Tomlins 2001).

However, the situation changed with the development of the mining economy in the 18th century. This raised wages and employment opportunities in the Portuguese colony and emigration increased. In the 18th century alone, about 600,000 Portuguese settled in Brazil, a mass emigration given that [Portugal](#) had a population of only 2 million people. In [North America](#), immigration was dominated by [British](#), [Irish](#), French and other Northern Europeans. Thus, by 1800s, almost 800,000 Spaniards emigrated to the New World, especially under the Bourbon Dynasty in the 19th century. Emigration to [New France](#) laid the origins of modern Canada, with important early immigration of colonists from Northern France.

B. THE SECOND WAVE

In the early years of the 19th century, immigration was light. By 1806, the flow of immigration was reduced to a trickle as hostilities between England and Napoleon's France disrupted Atlantic shipping lanes. With peace re-established in 1814, immigration from Great Britain, Ireland, Germany and Western Europe resumed at a record pace. Major port cities of this era were overwhelmed with newcomers, many of them sick or dying from the long journey. By the mid 1800s, immigrants poured in from around Europe especially choosing America as their destination and nearly all immigrants came in through the newly opened Ellis Island. Families often migrated together during this era, although young men frequently came first to find work. Some of these then sent for their wives, children, and siblings; others returned to their families in Europe with their saved wages. Reasons like war, famine, revolution, industrialization drove many Western Europeans away from their homelands during this phase.

From 1815 to 1932, 60 million people left Europe (with many returning home), primarily to 'areas of European settlement' in the Americas (especially to the United States, Canada, [Argentina](#) and [Brazil](#)), Australia, New Zealand and [Siberia](#). These populations also multiplied rapidly in their new habitat much more so than the populations of Africa and [Asia](#). As a result, on the eve of World War I, 38% of the world's total population was of European ancestry. The countries in the Americas that received a major wave of European immigrants from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s were: the United States (32.6 million), Argentina (6.5 million), Canada (5.1 million), Brazil (4.4 million), [Cuba](#) (1.4 million), and [Uruguay](#) (713,000). Other countries that received a more modest immigration flow (accounting for less than 10% of total European emigration to [Latin America](#)) were: Mexico (270,000), [Colombia](#) (126,000), [Chile](#) (90,000), Puerto Rico (62,000), [Peru](#) (30,000), and Paraguay (21,000) (Adler & Pouwels 1994).

Thus, as noted above, because of the changing times during this period about 60 million Europeans set sail for the resource abundant and labour scarce 'New World' in the century following 1820. The overwhelming majority of these arrived as immigrants in the Americas. While the United States was the dominant destination, there were significant flows to South America later in the century, led by Argentina and Brazil, and to Canada after the turn of the century. A small but persistent stream also linked the United Kingdom to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. European intercontinental emigration averaged about 300,000 per annum in the middle three decades (after the Irish famine), the figures more than doubled in the last two decades; and they rose to over a million per annum after the turn of the century.

During this period the countries creating European emigrants showed some definite patterns. The dominant emigration stream in the first half of the century comprised of the Irish Catholics, United Kingdom followed by Germany. A rising tide of Scandinavian and other northwest European emigrants joined these streams by mid century. All of these came to be called the "old" emigrants, but were joined by the "new" south and east Europeans in the 1880s. These new emigrants accounted for most of the rising emigrant tide in the late 19th century. First they came from Italy, Spain and Portugal, but after the 1890s the tide included Austria-Hungary, Russia and Poland. But most moved to escape European poverty and they did it using family resources, without government assistance,

restriction or, in more modern terminology, ‘guestworker’ permission. As for the Irish migrants, their emigration was a result of religious persecution under the British and Potato Famine of 1847. On the other hand, Germans left their homeland after the democratic revolution of 1848 for economic opportunities and Scandinavians after the Civil War.

As the technology of transport and communication improved, the costs and uncertainty of migration fell, and overseas migration came within reach of an increasing share of the European population for whom the move offered the most gain. European famine and revolution may have helped push the first great mass migration in the 1840s, but it was the underlying economic and demographic labour market fundamentals that made each subsequent surge bigger.

The character of immigrants from Europe changed in the latter half of the 19th century with high population growth in Southern and Eastern Europe, lack of jobs and food, scarcity of available farmland due to mechanization and religious persecution of the Russian Jews. On the other hand, freedom of rights, available land, freedom of religion, booming industries like steel and rail provided economic opportunities in other countries outside Europe. Some workers from Hungary and Poland moved to foreign locations like United States of America (USA) to work in railroads and steel mills. Other reasons that prompted accelerated emigration were: European economic collapse after the World War I, Xenophobia in reaction to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and Red Scare bombings in 1919. Marked demographic changes were conspicuous during this wave. For instance in a country like Brazil, the proportion of foreigners peaked in 1920, at just 7 percent or 2 million people, mostly Italians, Portuguese, Germans and Spaniards. However, the influx of 4 million European immigrants between 1880 and 1920 significantly altered the racial composition of the country.

Thus, the late 19th and 20th century which saw the second wave, developments such as, the world wars, forced migration and expulsion, Greek Turkish "population exchanges" in 1922, expulsions and refugee movements after the Russian revolution, refugees from national socialist Germany in the 1930s and the expulsion of Germans from what became western Poland after the Second World War unleashed a surge of migrations from European countries. Thus, during the 19th century there were predominantly ‘economic migrants’ from Europe, whereas during the 20th century, racial persecution, political oppression, and the ravages of revolutions, civil wars and two world wars became the predominant causes of flight transforming migrants into refugees (Alonso 2000).

C. THE THIRD WAVE

European Diaspora migration in the late 20th and 21st century

After the two World Wars, European migration grew when business had to look for new sources of labour. As farms mechanized and mills grew it increased migration. Even during the Great Depression many labourers moved out of Europe to work in the ‘boom towns’. The period of Cold War also witnessed some movement. However, the fall of the Iron Curtain led to the largest wave of migration the continent had seen since 1945-46. The sudden freedom of travel and Eastern Europe's mounting economic problems and social tension caused

by the transition to market economy had been important push factors. In many cases ethnic discrimination also played an important role.

Until 1945 Europe's migration history was predominantly marked by changing emigration patterns as seen in the section above. At the end of the colonial era and during the economic boom that followed Second World War, the situation in Europe changed rapidly. At first, European settlers and colonial officers and troops returned home in the course of decolonization. In the UK (United Kingdom), France, Belgium, and the Netherlands they were followed by migrant workers from the former overseas territories. In some cases this process created a steady inflow, in other cases the former colonial powers were confronted with large waves of immigrants. In the early 20th century the largest single wave of emigration was caused by the wars in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina consisting of Italian, Jewish and Slavic migrants. During this phase emigration from Western Europe reduced due to improved standards of living.

In one instance, about 17% of all European East-West migrants were from Poland. In contrast to other countries of origin, Polish emigration was ethnically heterogeneous. In the late 1960s, in reaction to the anti-Semitic campaign led by the state itself, a large proportion of Jewish Polish citizens went to Western Europe, Israel, and the USA. In 1980-81, however, the emigration of about 250,000 Poles fleeing from the imposition of martial law to the West especially to Austria and Germany was spontaneous. From 1986, when it again became possible to leave Poland and emigrate, a larger number of Poles of non-German origin tried to gain a foothold in the West. Between 1950 and 1990-91 about 2.1 million people emigrated from Poland; more than 1 million of them in the second half of the 1980s. Since then, however, about 60% of the non-ethnic German immigrants to the West have returned to Poland.

In another instance, emigration in the 1950s and early 1960 from Yugoslavia primarily involved two groups: first, Muslims of Turkish origin and Bosnian Muslims, the overwhelming majority of whom went to Turkey; and second, political opponents of the Tito regime, who headed for Western Europe and overseas. Also, the wars in Croatia (1991-92) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (199-93) and the repression of ethnic minorities in Vojvodina, Serbia and Kosovo led to the largest wave of European migration since 1945-46. Between 1991 and 1993 more than 5 million citizens of former Yugoslavia became refugees or displaced persons. Only 700,000 of them came to Western Europe, of whom 355,000 to Germany, 80,000 to Switzerland, 74,000 to Sweden, and 70,000 to Austria. Between 1950 and 1992 most of the migrants came from Romania and Bulgaria, but to a smaller extent also from former Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

At the same time, emigration after 1991 took place between the former Soviet Republics that became sovereign states (now Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member countries and the Baltic States). In the majority of cases ethnic Russians were returning from the peripheries of the former Soviet Empire. This was made possible, after the USA and some West European countries pressed for an easing of the restrictive Soviet emigration policy (OECD Database 2017).

Today, migration is clearly a global issue. Europe as a continent has substituted the single European country as a destination for migrants. The end of the

cold war triggered a new migration and a new geographical divide. 1990 was a landmark in European migration history when international borders were redefined, and the common European Union policy approach towards asylum and border control was launched.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit

1. Trace the origin of the European Diaspora.

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2. Explain briefly the ‘second wave’ of European emigration.

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19.5 EUROPEAN DIASPORA LINKAGES TODAY

As for the trends and developments in European Diasporic linkages today, of the 61.2 million European migrants worldwide in 2017, the majority (67 percent) lives in other European countries, followed by the United States (8 percent), Kazakhstan (5 percent), and Australia and Canada (4 percent each), according to United Nations Population Division estimates (United Nations Population Division Estimates, 2017). There are four categories of emigrants from the European continent. The first category consists of European nationals with no immigrant background with a high return rate (especially from the United Kingdom, France and Denmark). The second category is European nationals with an immigrant background, extremely difficult to capture in administrative statistics both at origin and destination (e.g. highly-skilled French-Algerians to Canada). The third group of emigrants is non-European nationals. They constitute a very high percentage among emigrants from Europe. In the case of Austria it is around 70% of the outflow; Denmark, Germany – 80%; Spain, France, and the Netherlands – 65%. The fourth group is EU nationals.

Following the new trends in Diaspora policies world-wide, for countries like the UK and the Netherlands, the issue of emigration of human capital has risen higher on the political agenda in the last ten years. The UK is the top European sending country to non-European destinations and the Netherlands is also among the top ten sending European states. This has to do with the economic engagement of British and Dutch companies in many countries around the world, but is also a question of specific categories of migrants. For instance, Dutch agrarian entrepreneurs tend to emigrate to places where they

can invest in agricultural production, hence a growing Dutch community in Australia. Countries have experienced increased emigration flows following the European Union accession, like Poland and the Baltic States and after the euro-zone crisis, like Portugal and Ireland (Godzimirski 2015). Most countries' diaspora policies are concerned not only with the negative effects of emigration, but focus on opportunities and relations between the diaspora and economic development. An example is Poland and its need to improve cooperation with the Polish Diaspora in Ukraine and the East, and with new and old Polish Diasporas in the West.

19.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF EUROPEAN DIASPORA TO EUROPE

In the current era of intensifying global human and capital flows, European diaspora's contribution to the development of their home countries is crucial. Therefore, the European Diaspora has become a vital asset leading to its recognition and contributions through remittances. As new technologies have mobilised contacts, the European Diaspora has become culturally creative, socially dynamic and politically active. Innovative development financing that includes novel engagement from the Diaspora remains at the forefront of policy debates. Here, the flow of remittances to the homeland has directly affected capacity building and development (Colin 1997; Newland 2004).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations highlights the positive contribution of migrants and Diaspora for achieving sustainable development. At the same time, the spirit of the Barcelona declaration, realizes that Diasporas are a resource for the European societies and that the idea of Diasporas provides solutions that are well worth promoting. According to the understanding, identities are not tied to a territory or to a source of authority to be legitimate and valuable. The idea of European Diasporas acknowledges that each one of can belong simultaneously to different places and to different groups but identities are rooted primarily in Europe.

Check your progress 2

Note: Check your answer with possible answers given at the end of the unit.

- Trace the main trends in European Diaspora linkages in the 20th and 21st centuries.

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- Explain briefly the possible contributions of the European Diaspora to Europe.

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19.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the meaning and concept of European Diaspora. We have explained "historic" and "contemporary" European Diasporas, referring respectively to Diaspora formation. Thereafter, we have tried to elucidate the origin and subsequent trends of European Diaspora in 19th, 20th and 21st century. Afterwards, we have briefly explained the current diasporic linkages. In discussing diaspora linkages, we explained the possible contributions of the European Diaspora to their home countries.

19.8 KEY WORDS

The First Wave: The first wave refers to European emigration came for a variety of religious, economic and political reasons. They came for new economic opportunities and better life. This happened because peasants were displaced and for allied reasons like, famine and poverty. Other push factors were freedom of religion from religious persecution.

The Second wave: The 'second wave' occurred mainly in the 18th and early 19th centuries when Europeans mainly from eastern and southern parts emigrated. The main cause was technological changes due to the Industrial Revolution. Then, there was the demand for employment in the new factories which attracted people who wanted to escape bad living conditions in their homelands

The Third Wave: Migration during the 20th and 21st century marked the 'third wave'. The sudden freedom of travel and Eastern Europe's mounting economic problems and social tensions caused by the transition to market economy had been important 'push factors'. In many cases ethnic discrimination also played an important role. The end of the Cold War also triggered a new migration pattern and a new geographical divide. 1990 is seen as the most recent landmark in European migration history when international borders were redefined, and the common European Union policy approach towards asylum and border control was launched.

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19.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS –POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

First Wave: The European diaspora consists of European people and their [descendants](#) who [emigrated](#) from [Europe](#). The ‘first wave’ can be traced back in time when emigration from [Europe](#) began on a large scale especially during the [Spanish Empire](#) in the 16th and 17th centuries (expansion of the [Hispanosphere](#)), the [British Empire](#) in the 17th to 19th centuries (expansion of the [Anglosphere](#)) and the [Portuguese Empire](#) and the [Russian Empire](#) in the early 19th century (expansion to [Central Asia](#) and the [Russian Far East](#)). The first significant European immigration wave, spanning centuries, the 16th to early 19th centuries consisted mostly of settlers from the British Isles attracted by economic opportunity and religious freedom.

1. Second Wave: The ‘second wave’ of European emigration entrenched itself well during the 19th century when there were predominantly “economic migrants” from Europe, whereas during the 20th century, racial persecution, political oppression, and the ravages of revolutions, civil wars and two world wars (World War I and World War II) became the predominant causes of migration.

Check your progress 2

2. Third Wave: Migration during the 20th and 21st century marked the ‘third wave’. The sudden freedom of travel and Eastern Europe's mounting economic problems and social tensions caused by the transition to market economy had been important ‘push factors’. In many cases ethnic discrimination also played an important role. The end of the Cold War also triggered a new migration pattern and a new geographical divide. 1990 is seen as the most recent landmark in European migration history when international borders were redefined, and the common European Union

policy approach towards asylum and border control was launched.

European Diaspora

3. Possible Diaspora contributions:

In the current era of intensifying global human and capital flows, Diaspora contribution to the development of their home countries is crucial. Innovative development financing that includes novel engagement from the Diaspora remains at the forefront of policy debates. The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations highlights the positive contribution of migrants and diaspora for achieving sustainable development. At the same time, the spirit of the Barcelona Declaration, realizes that European Diasporas are a resource for European societies and that the idea of Diasporas provides solutions that are well worth promoting.

