

Book Review of Favell, Adrian 2022. *The Integration Nation: Immigration and Colonial Power in Liberal Democracies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 226 pp



BOOK REVIEW

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Providing a critical intervention to conventional liberal democratic approaches to immigration, integration, and citizenship, Professor Adrian Favell's book *The Integration Nation: Immigration and Colonial Power in Liberal Democracies* gives a compelling overview of contemporary debates in European migration studies and calls for alternative approaches beyond mainstream conceptions of integration. Specifically, Favell builds a 'case for a new critical reflection on the use and centrality of integration as a concept,' understanding integration primarily as a normative program of nation-states (p. 4). The volume is organized into six chapters: Chapter 1 'Integration as a Paradigm'; Chapter 2 'Integration and Assimilation'; Chapter 3 'Integration and Multiculturalism'; Chapter 4 'Integration and Race'; Chapter 5 'Integration and Transnationalism'; and Chapter 6 'Integration and Decolonization.'

While mainstream views of integration see it as an encompassing, positive, and ultimately progressive concept, Favell argues that 'integration is and always was a fundamentally colonial term' (p. 2). As illustrated throughout the book, integration is based on 'the conventional "container state" view of national society' (p. 15), central to—but often implicit in—ongoing nation-state building, and involves conceptions of migration as a linear process. Favell points out that not all mobile populations are labeled as 'immigrants' and subjected to integration requirements. Rather, elites are able to float as 'free movers,' while more disadvantaged 'immigrants' are subjected to integration. For example, 'expats,' students, and tourists may move more freely, while individuals labeled as 'immigrants' and subjected to integration are often 'visible' and 'non-European' (pp. 44, 128). Thus, *vis-à-vis* integration, a preexisting national society is imagined and the nation-state is reaffirmed (pp. 29, 117). This nation-state building through integration, suggests Favell, is understood as part 'of the ongoing mission of liberal democracies to generate power from the successful management and governance of populations' (p. 12) where a linear progression 'towards citizenship is crucial to the nation-state's power' (p. 21). In this way, citizenship becomes an end goal—a benchmark of success—where many are 'effectively set up to fail' (p. 22).

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Integration, argues Favell, has a historical legacy embedded in colonialism and modernist developmental thought, a civilizational idea of nationhood (pp. 48–49). This is linked to race, where integration policy is characterized by the ‘production of race and ethnicity statistics’—or nationality as a proxy for race—as ‘part of their policies on managing immigration and diversity’ (pp. 90, 106). Through these technologies, migrants are pathologized and visible deficiencies are produced. Here, there is a ‘covert racialization’ that is ‘smuggled into conceptions of integration’ (p. 6). A consequence is ‘an almost inevitable racialization’ of the ‘majority’ population—typically a ‘whiteness’ in the European context—where the mainstream becomes homogenized and other forms of diversity become invisible (pp. 91, 96).

Integration and these measurements of race must be historicized and understood with consideration for colonialism, industrialization, and power on a global scale, with ‘racial hierarchy as part of its inherent logic’ (p. 93). Here, integration may mean being integrated into a racialized, stratified workforce where migrants may find themselves in ‘low-end positions’ (p. 167). At the opposite end of the spectrum, ‘Elites [...] often have a free pass nationally and transnationally because of their economic and human capital, and on the back of others who bear the brunt of nation-state reproduction through integration’ (p. 131), reflecting racial capitalism and the reproduction of privilege (p. 121).

Favell ultimately argues that racial capitalism is upheld by conventional liberal democratic approaches to immigration, integration, and citizenship, where these systems ‘are designed to keep these inequalities in place’ by allowing colonial powers to retain their centrality (p. 157). Thus, in the final chapter, Favell calls for decolonization and de-nationalization in order ‘to address the white supremacy implicit in ideas and models of integration’ (p. 159). Rather than looking to integration to patch up inequalities, Favell argues that we should look ‘for examples of rupture, contestation and subversion that underline the disintegrative power of migration and mobilities’ (pp. 172–173). This involves a transformative politics that goes beyond differentiating and dichotomizing ‘natives’ and ‘immigrants’ and aims at seeing collective interests to challenge ‘the national order of things and the racial capitalism it anchors’ (p. 173). For example, Favell points to the work of Çaglar and Glick Schiller (2018), who highlight how migrants and nonmigrants work together ‘to challenge capital-driven forms of urban regeneration’ within a non-bounded, multi-scalar space (p. 173). In regard to integration, this means (1) not allowing calls for integration to break up or divide solidarities against racial capitalism and (2) destabilizing consensus and the domination of national and colonial relations by shifting power relations and fueling politically desirable conflict (pp. 178–179).

As the Nordic countries are often framed in terms of having weak colonial ties and a racial exceptionalism that posits racism as something belonging ‘far away’ or ‘in the past’ (i.e., Hevik 2019: 18; Keskinen et al. 2009), one might question how Favell’s arguments generally built on what he terms the ‘North Atlantic West’ hold when considering Nordic contexts in particular. Yet, the colonial complicity of Nordic countries has been well documented, demonstrating colonial histories and legacies that inform present national imaginaries of white, homogenous Nordic welfare states (see, e.g., Keskinen et al. 2009). A wave of recent research in the Nordic countries has illustrated that the concept of integration is far from neutral, also in Nordic contexts (i.e., Andreasen 2019; Kurki 2019; Rytter 2019). Furthermore, integration research in the Nordic countries often focuses on the sustainability of the welfare state; yet, Favell argues that a focus on the welfare state is also used to justify strict migration

regimes, which in turn fuels neoconservative tendencies and ‘reveals its exclusionary nationalist core’ (p. 5, 85). To further this argument, Favell appeals to Agamben’s concept of ‘biopower’ where populations who enjoy citizenship and its subsequent rights and recognition depend on others ‘kept outside its realm to die without protection’ (p. 145). While rights within the Nordic countries are often extended to residents on a universal premise, the other side of this includes strict migration regimes—as convincingly argued by Favell—that result in border inhumanities, global inequalities, and injustice upholding racial capitalism. Therefore, while it is necessary to remain attentive to the distinctiveness of context, I argue that Favell’s book has critical interventions that are indeed relevant to the Nordic region.

Providing a paradigmatic critique, *The Integration Nation*’s primary audience is scholars. This book is relevant for anyone working in the field of migration studies, particularly for individuals working with the concept of integration. It is also interesting for those who are interested in critical and ‘reflexive’ migration studies; border and surveillance studies; and postcolonial and critical race theory.¹

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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¹ For further discussions, a symposium on *The Integration Nation* has been published in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* with contributions from Willem Schinkel, Janine Dahinden, Paul Statham, and Sara Wallace Goodman, as well as a response from Adrian Favell.

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