Book Review

Immigration and Conflict in Europe
By Rafaela M. Dancygier
Cambridge University Press. 2010. 354 pages.

Reviewer: Pierre Monforte, *University of Leicester*

Why, where and when does immigration lead to conflict in the areas of immigrant settlement in Europe? Rafaela M. Dancygier's book provides a deep and careful analysis of this crucial issue, through outstanding quantitative and qualitative methods. This study compares four locations over time in Britain. The comparison is also cross-national as it examines the German and French contexts. This is an excellent contribution to the literature on ethnic relations, racism and immigration policies in Europe. This book should also be of interest for those working on political violence or on local politics.

One challenge when studying the conflicts related to immigration is to distinguish different forms of conflicts. Dancygier convincingly does so by explaining "immigrant-native" and "immigrant-state" conflicts. While the first takes the form of racist violence directed at immigrants, the second involves sustained clashes between immigrant communities and state actors. The book explains their occurrence through a focus on economic and political factors. On the one hand, both conflicts occur in contexts of local economic scarcity. On the other hand, differences in immigrants' electoral strength lead to different types of conflict. When immigrants have electoral clout, local politicians will respond to their claims for more resources, and natives will be likely to contest this distribution and turn against immigrants. Conversely, in localities in which immigrants cannot back up their claims for scarce economic goods with pivotal votes, immigrant-state conflicts will be more likely to occur. These arguments imply that immigrant-native conflicts are in fact "a sign of immigrant integration," while immigrant-state conflicts indicate the "maintenance of discriminatory barriers."

The nuanced and precise comparison of the four locations in Britain illustrates this argument and shows the significant variations of conflict related to immigration in this country. In locations where immigrants have a strong electoral influence, differences in terms of economic scarcity have led to different intensities of immigrant-native conflicts over time. While one location faces recurrent episodes of racist violence against immigrants since the 1950s, others have seen these conflicts dissipating, due to the amelioration of immigrants' economic condition. Focusing on the case of Birmingham, the author shows then that the low electoral influence of immigrants has resulted in the decrease of immigrant-native conflicts but in the occurrence of immigrant-state conflicts.

In her cross-national comparison, the author extends her argument and investigates the implications of national immigration and citizenship regimes for immigrant-native and immigrant-state conflicts. This comparison shows how national policies have had varied implications on the economic well-being and electoral influence of immigrants in Britain, Germany and France, leading in turn to different patterns of conflicts in these three countries.

The analyses on the variations of these conflicts across places and time are the most important and convincing developments in the book. Beyond that, Dancygier puts forward two more general arguments that shed light on the variations of these conflicts across ethnic groups and on the influence of xenophobic parties.

First, she shows that, in the United Kingdom, while South Asian immigrants are more often victims of racist violence than West Indians, the latter are more often involved in immigrant-state conflicts than the former. For her, the explanation lies in the organizational dynamics of these two groups. Immigrants from South Asia have used their "strong links of kin, caste and clan" to gain political influence at the local level, leading to a growing hostility among natives. Differently, West Indian immigrants, who have a weaker social organization, have been less able to translate their presence into political leverage, and so have more often tended to translate their claims into antistate violence.

Then, based on a rich database and precise statistical analysis of immigrant-native conflicts in the Unite Kingdom during the 2000s, she clearly demonstrates that the occurrence of racist violence is correlated with the presence of a xenophobic political party at the local level. She shows thus that rather than being substitutes they reinforce each other mutually.

It is difficult not to like Dancygier's book. It is a clear and well-written study that relies on an extremely stimulating theory as well as rich empirical data and an outstanding comparative approach. Although national trends are underlined, her results point above all to a path dependency of relations between immigrants and natives at the local level. They suggest thus to explore further these local dynamics and their discrepancies with the national immigration or citizenship regimes.

As a matter of fact, this is when the focus is moved to the national level that the analysis is weaker. On several aspects, the analysis of the German and French contexts could be developed. The comparison with Britain would then be clearer and more consistently related with the main argument of the book, which is that local politics is crucial for native-immigrant relations. One would thus love to read more about local dynamics in Germany and in France.

More generally, the analysis is sometimes too vague when it comes to describing who are the actors involved in these conflicts. One learns certainly much about the population of the locations observed by the author, but one reads much less about the protagonists of the conflicts. In these locations, why do some people participate in conflicts and others not? Also, what are the grievances they express in the course of conflictive events? On a related point, one would like to know more about these events and their relations. How do they burst? Do we observe dynamics of escalation? Do we

observe relations of mutual enforcement between immigrant-native and immigrant-state conflicts? In sum, one learns more about the causes of conflicts than about their internal dynamics. Does it mean that both are not related? This is a debate on which the author should probably engage.

Finally, from a more theoretical point of view, the author explicitly ascribes instrumentality to immigrant-native and immigrant-state violence. This assumption is, as she writes, "contentious" and could easily be challenged with references to the literature on social movements, and in particular studies that underline the role of cultural or emotional factors of protest. As a matter of fact, much of the conflicts she observes can be considered as collective actions, and it is therefore surprising that the author does not refer with more consistency to the literature on social movements.

These reservations aside, Dancygier's book is an extremely valuable study that should be recommended to anyone interested in contemporary European societies.