

Connecticut Debate Association
State Finals, March 27, 2021
Online Tournament

Resolved: The United States should have an open immigration policy.

Immigration to the United States

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Immigration to the United States is the international movement of non-U.S. nationals in order to reside permanently in the country.[1] Immigration has been a major source of population growth and cultural change throughout much of the U.S. history. Because the United States is a settler colonial society, all Americans, with the exception of the small percentage of Native Americans, can trace their ancestry to immigrants from other nations around the world.

In absolute numbers, the United States has a larger immigrant population than any other country, with 47 million immigrants as of 2015.[2] This represents 19.1% of the 244 million international migrants worldwide, and 14.4% of the U.S. population. Some other countries have larger proportions of immigrants, such as Switzerland with 24.9% and Canada with 21.9%.[3][4]

According to the 2016 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, the United States admitted a total of 1.18 million legal immigrants (618k new arrivals, 565k status adjustments) in 2016.[5] Of these, 48% were the immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, 20% were family-sponsored, 13% were refugees and/or asylum seekers, 12% were employment-based preferences, 4.2% were part of the Diversity Immigrant Visa program, 1.4% who were victims of a crime (U1) or their family members (U2 to U5),[6] and 1.0% who were granted the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) for Iraqis and Afghans employed by U.S. Government.[5] The remaining 0.4% included small numbers from several other categories, including 0.2% who were granted suspension of deportation as an immediate relative of a citizen (Z13);[7] persons admitted under the Nicaraguan and Central American Relief Act; children born subsequent to the issuance of a parent's visa; and certain parolees from the former Soviet Union, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam who were denied refugee status.[5]

The economic, social, and political aspects of immigration have caused controversy regarding such issues as maintaining ethnic homogeneity, workers for employers versus jobs for non-immigrants, settlement patterns, impact on upward social mobility, crime, and voting behavior.

Between 1921 and 1965, policies such as the national origins formula limited immigration and naturalization opportunities for people from areas outside Western Europe. Exclusion laws enacted as early as the 1880s generally prohibited or severely restricted immigration from Asia, and quota laws enacted in the 1920s curtailed Eastern European immigration. The civil rights movement led to the replacement[8] of these ethnic quotas with per-country limits for family-sponsored and employment-based preference visas.[9] Since then, the number of first-generation immigrants living in the United States has quadrupled.[10][11]

Research suggests that immigration to the United States is beneficial to the U.S. economy. With few exceptions, the evidence suggests that on average, immigration has positive economic effects on the native population, but it is mixed as to whether low-skilled immigration adversely affects low-skilled natives. Studies also show that immigrants have lower crime rates than natives in the United States

On Immigration, Do as the Romans Did

Bloomberg News, By Gerard J. Tellis and Stav Rosenzweig, Feb. 7, 2018

For 2,000 years, countries that embrace outsiders have risen, while closed societies have stagnated.

Are immigrants a net benefit to the recipient country? The continuing debate over the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program has revived public conversation about that question. In the short term, immigrants increase demand for public services, while competing with native workers for jobs. The benefits, on the other hand, play out in the long term. Openness to outsiders has the power to make or break a civilization. Throughout the past two millennia, nations that admitted and empowered immigrants have flourished, while those that closed themselves off have stagnated and declined.

The Roman Empire regularly conferred rights or even citizenship on peoples that it conquered, welcoming outsiders into the army, bureaucracy and politics—and eventually even to the throne. Immigrants brought resources, talent and cultural dynamism that helped give Rome an edge over other civilizations that rose and fell around the Mediterranean

during the same era.

Our research suggests that the Mongol Empire also sought to integrate conquered peoples. Today the Mongols are largely remembered as a warrior nation that ravaged Asian and European cities during the rule of Genghis Khan. But they also offered their peoples land to till honorably and established a system of free trade that rejuvenated the Silk Road, allowing the fruitful exchange of goods and innovation between Europe and Asia. The Mongol court welcomed people of diverse ethnicities and religions.

Between the 15th and 17th centuries the Netherlands was a bastion of tolerance, even as Europe was racked by religious battles between Protestants and Catholics. The Dutch accepted Northern European immigrants seeking better economic prospects. They welcomed Protestant, Jewish and Muslim refugees from Southern Europe fleeing religious persecution. The rise of the Dutch Empire coincided with this embrace of outsiders. Immigrants fueled innovation, enterprise and economic expansion that gave the small country a global reach. In contrast, Portugal and Spain were in decline while they enforced the Catholic Inquisition.

Likewise, the rise of England from a small island state to an empire during the 17th and 18th centuries coincided with its embrace of Europeans fleeing religious or political persecution. England became a hotbed for ideas, scientific research and technology, which in turn attracted more immigrants.

Perhaps the most powerful example from history is that of the U.S. compared with Brazil and Mexico. In the early 18th century, the latter two offered immigrants the most desirable opportunities, while North America was a backwater. Yet over the next 200 years, Brazil and Mexico struggled, while the U.S. rose to become a world power.

The countries' contrasting attitudes toward immigration were an important factor. The U.S. welcomed immigrants of all religions and countries of Europe, while Brazil and Mexico strongly favored Catholics, mostly from Portugal and Spain respectively. The U.S. gave most immigrants the right to move around in the country, own land, and start businesses. This led to a population boom, a growing workforce, a flowering of innovation, and a burst of entrepreneurship. Despite its intemperate climate and rough terrain, the U.S. became the land of opportunity that continues to flourish today.

It is counterintuitive that poor immigrants, who lack assets and skills, can be a net benefit. But the loss of home, security and endowment that is a result of emigrating sparks creativity and prompts hard work. Coupled with increased demand, this new activity leads to economic expansion. Thus, while immigration creates clear short-term costs, the long-term gains are more than worth the investment.

It is not possible to run a perfect experiment to observe how immigration shapes a country. But history reveals a clear pattern. For over 2,000 years, the innovation and prosperity of nations has seemed to coincide with their embrace of immigrants. Conversely, stagnation and decline have coincided with closed systems that persecute minorities. At a time when easy answers on DACA and immigration policy are not evident, these historical cases are worth careful scrutiny.

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How to Make America Greater: More Immigration

The New York Times, By Eduardo Porter, Feb. 7, 2017

President Trump will make America smaller.

He may not be thinking in these terms. But as he barrels ahead with his promise to restrict immigration — barring people from some Muslim-majority countries, limiting work visas, expelling millions who are here illegally — the president might want to ponder how this fits the theme of making America "great again."

For his plan, at the scale he promises, would shrink the American economy and impoverish the world. If greatness is what he pursues, a straightforward way to bulk up the economy — not to say bolster global growth — would be to allow many more immigrants in.

Consider the report on immigration released last fall by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. It concluded that immigration to the United States from 1990 to 2010, both legal and illegal, produced net benefits worth \$50 billion a year to the native population.

This might seem insignificant in an \$18 trillion economy. But it packs more than meets the eye. It is more than the government's estimate of what the country would have gained from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the grand deal with 11 other countries around the Pacific Rim negotiated over eight years by the Obama administration but abandoned by Mr. Trump.

The number does not consider many likely benefits from immigration. For instance, immigrants are younger. They are slowing the aging of the work force. Low-skilled immigrants may increase the labor supply of high-skilled natives, say, by providing cheap child care and releasing mothers to work. High-skilled immigrants contribute disproportionately to

innovation, seeking patents at a higher rate than natives.

Notably, the number does not include the economic rewards that accrue to the immigrants themselves: 26 million foreigners in the American labor market added some \$2 trillion to the American economy last year, according to the National Academies report.

Mr. Trump has not shown much interest in the well-being of people born outside the nation's borders. But even in the narrowest, most parochial sense, their income contributes to the nation's greatness. As Mr. Trump maneuvers to face off with China, he might stop to consider what the rivalry would look like if the United States were \$2 trillion smaller.

This is a challenge for not only Mr. Trump but also the entire crop of xenophobic, nativist leaders emerging all over the industrialized world: Few things would make the economic pie bigger than free flows of people from poor countries to rich ones. Immigration — not trade liberalization or the elimination of barriers to capital flows — offers the best shot at raising the incomes of the poor and increasing economic output around the world.

It's not even surprising. Research by Michael A. Clemens of the Center for Global Development, Lant Pritchett of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and Claudio E. Montenegro of the World Bank found that a 35-year-old urban man born and educated in Peru, who had nine years of school and worked in the formal Peruvian economy, made an average of \$452 a month. A Peruvian with these exact characteristics working in the United States, by contrast, made \$1,714 a month.

A typical Pakistani worker who moved from Karachi to Los Angeles would at a stroke make more than six times as much. A Yemeni would raise his earnings 14.5 times. And this would not even require retraining. Someone flipping murtabak on the streets of Sana'a would earn 15.5 times as much simply by coming to New York to flip burgers at McDonald's.

These vast wage gaps underscore the critical value of place: The physical and social infrastructure of the United States automatically lifts the productivity of workers from the most backward countries. But the income differential also highlights how tough barriers against immigration truly are.

If workers could move seamlessly across borders, wages of similar workers would tend to converge. The wage gap is a measure of the barriers that remain: An hour of work by a Pakistani in New York costs 6.5 times what an hour of the same Pakistani's time costs in Karachi. By contrast, the product of that Pakistani's work back home could enter the United States paying a tariff, on average, of only 3.5 percent.

If barriers to immigration are orders of magnitude steeper than barriers to trade, removing such obstacles — allowing workers to flock to where they are most productive — would provide a much bigger impetus to the economy than any effort at trade liberalization.

"If trade deals were strictly about efficiency and growing the size of the overall economic pie," argues Dani Rodrik of the Kennedy School, "trade negotiators would drop everything else on their agenda and spend their whole time trying to strike a bargain whereby workers from poor countries could participate in the labor markets of the rich countries."

Indeed, some economists have estimated that allowing free cross-border movement of labor could more than double the world's gross domestic product. As Mr. Clemens at the Center for Global Development put it, maintaining harsh barriers on immigration amounts to leaving "trillion-dollar bills on the sidewalk."

Immigration carries costs, of course. It weighs on the wages of the workers who directly compete with the newcomers. And yet they are small compared with the vast potential for gains.

Even some of the most pessimistic analysts find relatively modest effects on domestic workers. George Borjas of Harvard, by no means a supporter of liberal immigration, has estimated that the newcomers who arrived in the United States from 1990 to 2010 reduced the wages of American-born high school dropouts over the long term by 3.1 percent — or some \$900 a year.

This number has been criticized as far too high by other economists for relying on implausible assumptions. But even if it were correct, it would not seem like a big deal. To help the 10 million high school dropouts in the labor force, there are more effective tools (like raising the earned-income tax credit) than immigration law.

That is not to say America's borders should be opened to all comers. Whatever the economic benefits, immigration remains a touchy topic everywhere. A poll by the Pew Research Center in 2010 found that three in four Americans favored tighter restrictions on immigration. So did 66 percent of Germans, 77 percent of Venezuelans and 89 percent of South Africans.

And who knows what would happen to productivity and wages, to politics and social cohesion, if immigration took off on an unprecedented scale? A third of adults in sub-Saharan Africa say they would like to migrate permanently. So would a fifth of Latin Americans and one in 10 South and East Asians, according to a Gallup World poll from 2010. About a quarter of these potential migrants — 145 million adults — would like to live in the United States.

But that still leaves space for moderate liberalization. As Mr. Clemens argues, if only 5 percent of the population of poor countries were allowed to migrate to richer ones, the global gains would exceed those made from removing all policy barriers to merchandise trade and capital flows.

So how about an expanded guest-worker program? It could grant visas for, say, a fixed five-year period with no path to citizenship, and deploy both carrots and sticks to ensure that workers returned home. This would help spread the benefits of migration around, and also help the nations sending the migrants, who would benefit from their experience and capital when they returned home. Considering the dim prospects for global growth, the economy could use the help. Such an about-face might prove politically costly — not to say embarrassing for Mr. Trump. But unlike many of his ideas, it would help keep America great.

I'm a Liberal Who Thinks Immigration Must Be Restricted

The New York Times, By Jerry Kammer, Jan. 16, 2020

Immigration can invigorate the country. But when it is poorly managed, it can cause social division — just as it's doing right now.

In 2001, when I was the new Washington correspondent for The Arizona Republic, I attended the annual awards dinner of the National Immigration Forum. The forum is a left-right coalition that lobbies for unauthorized immigrants and expansive immigration policies. Its board has included officials of the National Council of La Raza, the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Immigration Lawyers Association, as well as the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Restaurant Association and the American Nursery and Landscape Association.

After dinner, the group's executive director, Frank Sharry, made a pitch to business allies who wanted Congress to allow them unfettered access to foreign workers. "You guys in business get all the workers you want, whenever you want them," he proposed. "No bureaucracy."

"Sold!" yelled John Gay, a lobbyist for the American Hotel and Lodging Association. Mr. Sharry quickly added that the deal must include advocacy for "three little, tiny pieces of paper: a green card, a union card and a voter registration card" for unauthorized immigrants.

For me, a reporter who had long covered immigration in the Southwest and Mexico, the exchange was a revelation about the politics of immigration in Washington. Business lobbyists like Mr. Gay — conservatives who seek loose labor markets so employers can keep wages down — align themselves with liberal activists like Frank Sharry to pursue policies that serve their groups.

Who, I wondered, was lobbying for the American workers competing with the new arrivals? The answer, I learned, was no one. As the former labor secretary Robert Reich once put it, "There's no National Association of Working Poor."

This mismatch of political influence, combined with the social and fiscal consequences of a wave of low-skilled immigrants, led me to believe that immigration should be restricted so that its power to invigorate our country is not eclipsed by its potential to harm workers. I think immigration, like capitalism itself, should be regulated in the national interest, not shaped to serve the free-market libertarianism of the right or the post-national humanitarianism of the left.

That's why I call myself a liberal restrictionist. I have long considered myself a moderate liberal, in part because Democrats have always been the allies of working people. For many decades, liberals were outspoken in their alarm about illegal immigration.

In 1970, Senator Walter Mondale warned that "we have a massive poverty population coming into the country" from Mexico. In 1983 a New York Times editorial argued that while the country needed immigrants, "what it does not need is such an uncontrollable flood of illegal migrants that it tries public patience." In 1994, Barbara Jordan, the civil rights icon chosen by President Bill Clinton to direct the Federal Commission on Immigration Reform, told Congress, "As a nation of immigrants committed to the rule of law, this country must set limits on who can enter." In 2003, Hillary Clinton declared that she was "adamantly against illegal immigration."

But by the time Mrs. Clinton was running for president in 2016, she was courting the Latino vote, pledging not to deport unauthorized immigrants who did not have criminal records.

Now many liberal Democrats, including those who call for the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, seek to erase the distinction between legal and illegal immigration. Under the banner of inclusiveness, equality, human rights, racial reconciliation and reparations for American interventions in the third world, those liberals demand sanctuary for those who make it past the Border Patrol or overstay a visa. Few speak openly of open borders, but that is essentially what they are calling for.

Over the years, righteous outrage against restrictionists has been fueled by some truly odious people. Lance Morrow of Time magazine described the problem in 1980: "Ku Klux Klansmen have paraded around Florida lately, dispensing their old nativist bile and giving a bad name to an argument ('America for Americans,' the picket signs say) that has

more thoughtful and respectable proponents.”

Today, President Trump has brought such outrage into the mainstream with the repugnant charge that unauthorized immigrants “infest our country.” But Mr. Trump does not deserve all the blame for our dysfunction. The immigration debate has been warped by tribal passions on the left as well.

What the left misses is that as Mr. Trump pursues his draconian efforts to stem the tide, many Americans think he is fighting the good fight. They may be dismayed at his manic nastiness and his proclivity for crude insult. But they admire his willingness to wage what they see as a patriotic battle to defend common people.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the prominent liberal historian, believed that immigration restrictions were essential. He wrote in “The Disuniting of America” that while “any curtailment of immigration offends something in the American soul,” it was also true that “uncontrolled immigration is an impossibility.”

President Ronald Reagan in 1986 proclaimed that he and Congress had fulfilled that duty. He signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act, combining an amnesty with a program to stop future illegal immigration by requiring employers to verify that their new hires were legal.

The amnesty was delivered. Work-site enforcement was not. Illegal immigration exploded. From 1990 to 2007, the unauthorized population grew at an annual average of 500,000. It reached a peak of 12.2 million in 2007, before falling to its present level of about 11 million.

In 2004, as the national immigration reporter for the San Diego-based Copley newspaper chain, I returned to Arizona to report on Proposition 200, a statewide ballot initiative to deny public services to unauthorized immigrants. Public anxiety had grown in tandem with the state’s illegal immigrant population, which had jumped to 480,000 in 2005 from an estimated 88,000 in 1990.

In Phoenix I spoke with Donna Neill, a volunteer organizer in a working-class neighborhood and the driving force in the construction of a park that was used primarily by immigrant children. Nevertheless, she supported Proposition 200.

She pointed to crowded classrooms, apartments where two or three families crammed into a space meant for one and home additions in violation of housing codes that went unenforced. “We’re losing the simple things that make a society a society, but no one wants to step forward because they’re afraid of crossing some line and being called a racist,” said Ms. Neill.

Despite a publicity campaign that branded the proposition as racist, it was approved by a large margin. Exit polls showed that 47 percent of Latino voters had supported it. “People think they’re driving down wages and taking jobs,” John Garcia, a professor of political science at the University of Arizona, told me. (Such concerns would later be overshadowed by Latinos’ anger at a state law that targeted illegal immigration and by the neighborhood “sweeps” orchestrated by Sheriff Joe Arpaio.)

In 2008, I left the newspaper industry. But the immigration story still tugged at me. I was fascinated by its human, political and moral complexity. I also wanted to push back against the campaign by activist groups to label restrictionism as inherently racist. A year later, I became a researcher and writer for the Center for Immigration Studies, which seeks restrictions on immigration.

I disagree with some of the center’s hard-line positions. I favor a generous welcome for those who were brought here illegally as children and support comprehensive reform that would reprise the 1986 amnesty-plus-enforcement compromise. But restrictionists are right to insist that any new reform must guarantee work-site controls. They also make valid points in pushing for a system of legal immigration like the one developed by Canada, which favors people with education and skills.

No one understood the moral ambiguity of the immigration debate better than the historian and immigration scholar John Higham. Higham was a liberal contrarian who observed that while restrictionists “claimed to be the hard-boiled realists,” their realism “was seldom free of prejudice or hysteria.” On the other side, “anti-restrictionists tended to gloss over the dilemmas that immigration imposed.”

Higham urged adoption of the 1986 immigration legislation and was dismayed when it wasn’t enforced. In the Higham archives at Johns Hopkins University, where he taught for many years, I found a letter in which he identified himself as “a mild restrictionist.”

I like that label. It suggests the conciliatory spirit that our country so badly needs. As the political divide around immigration intensified in the years before his death in 2003, Higham worried about the prospects for such a spirit. “Are we experiencing, basically, an increasing indifference of people to one another, both within and between ethnic groups?” he wrote. “If so, immigration may prove to be just an aspect of a wider social fragmentation.”

Higham, it seems, anticipated the tempest now upon us.

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The Democratic Party's Dangerous Immigration Experiment

The Wall Street Journal, By Jason L. Riley, March 23, 2021

Today's progressives are eager to see what happens when a large welfare state opens its borders.

What are the Biden administration's immigration priorities? Are they to erase the southern border for all intents and purposes, while legalizing everyone currently in the country without authorization?

An objective observer might easily draw such conclusions. So far, the White House has ostentatiously reversed any number of border-security provisions enacted by the previous administration and thrown its weight behind amnesty legislation that would apply to more than a third of the country's estimated 12 million illegal immigrants. And then there are the not-so-mixed messages to potential migrants. Out one side of its mouth, the administration shouts, "Don't come, the border is closed!" Out the other side, it whispers, "But if you do make it to the U.S., even illegally, you'll almost certainly be allowed to stay."

This is no way to run a sovereign nation. Even Democratic administrations used to understand that without a border there is no country. And without security, there is no border. "We must say 'no' to illegal immigration so we can continue to say 'yes' to legal immigration," said President Clinton, who responded to a spike in illegal immigration in the early 1990s by asking Congress for additional funding, among other things to "protect our borders, remove criminal aliens, reduce work incentives for illegal immigration [and] stop asylum abuse."

These problems, you might have noticed, are still with us, and in some cases have worsened, yet the Democratic Party's resolve seems long gone. Replacing it is a growing belief on the political left that people should be allowed to enter the U.S. on their terms rather than ours, and that it is our collective responsibility to take care of them if they can't take care of themselves. Milton Friedman said that open immigration and large welfare states are incompatible, and today's progressives in Congress and the White House are eager to test that proposition.

When Lyndon Johnson launched the Great Society, he at least had the good sense to finance his spending bonanza with tax cuts—on the rich!—that had been proposed by John F. Kennedy. "The primary goal of the Kennedy-Johnson tax program," Johnson biographer Randall Woods wrote, "was not integration with the well-to-do, per se, but creation of the political and economic capital to fund measures of health, education and welfare." Mr. Woods called the 1964 tax cut an economic "stroke of genius": "Month after month, quarter after quarter, the major indices of growth moved upward."

Mr. Biden's plans to expand the welfare state are the most ambitious since LBJ's, though one significant difference is that Democrats today are borrowing money to fund it, and simply crossing their fingers that interest rates don't rise. Another concern is the left's determination to sever any connection between work and benefits, something all the more worrisome since it is occurring while destitute foreign nationals with little education are being lured here en masse.

America has a long and proud tradition of admitting poor migrants who don't stay that way. These newcomers have tended to be upwardly mobile because they came for the right reasons. Laws barring paupers date to colonial times. The first major piece of immigration legislation, passed in 1882, prohibited entry "to any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge," and a similar stipulation was included in a 1930 executive order signed by President Herbert Hoover. Earlier this month, the Biden administration quietly announced that it would no longer enforce a policy that limited the admission of immigrants who were deemed likely to become overly dependent on government benefits. What could go wrong?

The argument that the U.S. is already a "welfare magnet" has been undermined by the reality of where poor immigrants settled after arriving, and by their use of public benefits relative to the native-born underclass. Generally, the states with the fastest-growing immigrant populations haven't been the ones with the most generous welfare benefits, which is some indication that migrants come looking for work rather than handouts. A 2018 Cato Institute report comparing immigrants and natives who qualify for public assistance found that "immigrants are less likely to consume welfare benefits and, when they do, they generally consume a lower dollar value of benefits than native-born Americans."

The question is how long this will remain true as America's welfare state continues to expand and as liberals invite any and all to come take advantage of it, perverse incentives be damned. In countries like Italy and France, generous aid programs have attracted poor migrants who are more likely than natives to be heavy users of welfare and less likely to be working. It's a mistake to think it can't happen here.

The case for immigration

The Economist, Apr 16th 2018, BY L.S. AND E.H.

Can rich countries accept migrants without jeopardising their democracies?

IN HIS novel “Exit West”, Mohsin Hamid describes a world very like our own, but which is suddenly changed by the appearance of mysterious doors. A dark-skinned man falls out of an Australian woman’s wardrobe in Sydney. Filipino women emerge from the back door of a bar into the alleyways of Tokyo. As the incidents multiply and scores of people from poor countries walk through the doors into richer ones, rich-world inhabitants respond with violent resistance. Governments crack down hard on the new arrivals. But it is not long before they are overwhelmed by their sheer number and abandon efforts to repel them. The world settles into an uneasy new equilibrium. Shantytowns emerge on the slopes of San Francisco Bay. Conflicts in war-torn places burn out for want of civilians to kill and exploit.

Mr Hamid’s story comes close to what many advocates of open borders believe the world would look like if people were free to move wherever they wanted: fairer, freer, with more opportunities for a larger number of people. But it also nods to the fears many people have about unfettered migration: uncertainty, disorder, violence. Would such a world be a dream or a nightmare? The answer depends on whom you ask.

Few things have caused citizens in Western liberal democracies more angst in recent years than borders and migration. In the United States, voters chose a president in 2016 who promised to build a wall to stem the flow of migrants from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, and who has since sought to ban people from several Muslim-majority countries from travelling to America. In many European countries, right-wing parties have risen to prominence on an anti-immigration platform. Concerns about immigration played a major role in the British vote to leave the European Union in the summer of 2016. When Angela Merkel, Germany’s chancellor, opened her country to hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Syrian war in the summer of 2015, she was applauded for her humanitarian impulse. But two years later, German voters punished her party at the polls for what many now argue was a rash and irresponsible decision. A big share of the vote went to a party that promised strict limits on immigration. So has migration gone too far already? Or would the world be a better place if borders were more open than they are?

Advocates of entirely open borders tend to advance two types of arguments. The first is economic. Opening all borders would make the world instantly richer. Some believe that it could double the world’s GDP. That is because workers become more productive as they move from a poor country to a rich one. They join a labour market with ample capital, efficient firms and a predictable legal system. If they are service workers, they will find richer and better-paying clients. By some estimates, more than two-thirds of a person’s overall wealth is determined by where they live and work.

The second argument for open borders is a moral one. Where someone is born is entirely a matter of chance, so there is no moral justification for compelling people to stay in a poor country. By the same token, those lucky enough to have been born in rich countries have no right to exclude others from their good fortune.

Opponents of open borders are not convinced by either of those arguments. Even if the world as a whole were to grow richer thanks to open borders, they say, poorer people in the migrants’ destination countries would suffer. The new arrivals would depress their wages and compete with them for resources such as social housing and unemployment benefits. The welfare states that Western democracies have painstakingly built over the past few decades would collapse under the task of absorbing millions of people ill-suited to local labour markets. Cultural conflicts between natives and immigrants would before long cause violent clashes, threatening social stability.

They question the moral case, too. The first duty of democratic governments is to their citizens, they argue. If a majority of these citizens oppose large-scale immigration (as is the case in several European countries), the government cannot simply ignore their wishes, even if it thinks it would take the moral high ground by doing so. By that logic, Mrs Merkel’s unilateral decision to invite refugees into Germany was not so much a laudable humanitarian gesture as a sign of her contempt for the German electorate.

Most people are neither for nor against open borders, but somewhere in between. The policies of many liberal democracies incorporate elements from both sides. They tend to recognise the right of asylum for those persecuted in their home countries. But they also have caps on immigrant numbers and laws providing for the deportation of the unwanted. Moreover, most countries distinguish between refugees, who are fleeing political persecution or war and must be given shelter, and economic migrants, who are “merely” seeking a better life and are only welcomed under certain conditions.

Whatever one’s view of open borders, there is little doubt that existing migration policies are no longer fit for purpose. The UN estimates that 258m people now live in places other than their country of birth, an increase of nearly 50% since 2000. Around 65m have been forcibly displaced either within their own country or outside it. Most of them are in poor or middle-income countries. For all the debates raging in Europe and America, rich countries still take in only a small fraction of the world’s most vulnerable migrants. Rich countries can and must do more to help those beset by war, persecution or economic duress. How they can do this without jeopardising their own democracies is one of the hardest questions facing liberals today.

The United States v Canada

The Economist, May 20th 2011, BY E.G. | AUSTIN

Why the differing views on immigration?

AS A matter of national policy, Canada actively solicits immigrants and has done so for years. The public supports this and the default political assumption is in support of continued immigration. According to a recent poll, only a third of Canadians believe immigration is more of a problem than an opportunity, far fewer than any other country included in the survey. Rather, Canadians are concerned about "brain waste" and ensuring that foreign credentials are appropriately recognised and rewarded in the job market? Being an immigrant is also no barrier to being a proper Canadian; in parliamentary elections earlier this month, 11% of the people elected were not native. This warm embrace isn't just a liberal abstraction; 20% of Canadians are foreign-born.

It's well-known that Canada is an outlier among immigrant nations, but it is nonetheless interesting to consider in reference to the ongoing and heated debate about immigration in the United States. Why is Canadian public opinion so different from views in United States?

At a conference yesterday, Jeffrey Reitz, a sociologist at the University of Toronto, cited two big explanations for the difference. The first was that Canadians are convinced of the positive economic benefits of immigration—to the extent that towns under economic duress are especially keen to promote immigration, because they believe immigrants will create jobs. Even unemployed Canadians will stoutly insist that immigrants do not take work away from the native born. This makes sense, as most immigrants to Canada are authorised under a "points" system tied to their credentials and employment potential. About half of Canadian immigrants have bachelor's degrees. They may have a higher unemployment rate than native-born workers, Mr Reitz said, and they benefit from programmes and services created specially for immigrants, such as language training. But the preponderance of evidence suggests that Canada's immigrants, being high-skilled, are net contributors.

Mr Reitz's second explanation was that Canadians see multiculturalism as an important component of national identity. In one public opinion poll, Mr Reitz said, multiculturalism was deemed less important than national health care but more important than the flag, the Mounties, and hockey. Irene Bloemraad, a sociologist at the University of California at Berkeley, picked up this theme. There wasn't such a thing as a purely Canadian passport, she said, until 1947. Canada was, psychosocially, very much a part of the British commonwealth until quite recently. When it came time to create a distinctively Canadian identity, the country included a large and vocal Francophone minority (as well as a considerable number of first peoples). The necessity of bilingualism contributed to a broader public commitment to multiculturalism, which persists today.

Other factors allow Canada to be more inviting. The country has little reason to worry about illegal immigration. Like the United States, it shares a long southern border with a country suffering from high levels of crime, unemployment and income inequality. But there aren't millions of Americans yearning to get into Canada. To put it another way, the United States's buffer zone from the eager masses is a shallow river. Canada's is the United States. That reduces unauthorised migration to Canada and eases public anxiety about it. Canada also has a smaller population and lower birth rate than the United States—it needs immigrants for population growth.

Incidentally, the emphasis on multiculturalism points to an interesting normative distinction between the United States and Canada. The United States supports pluralism and in some respect this leads to similar structures in the two countries. (Ms Bloemraad mentioned that both the United States and Canada have unusually robust legal protections against discrimination, for example.) But in the United States, you rarely hear somebody advocate for immigration on the grounds that it adds to the social fabric of the country. When the normative argument arises here, it has a humanitarian dimension. I would posit that in the United States, identity is a right, not a value.

Still, looking at Canada, we can extrapolate a few things for the United States. The first is that, as we've previously discussed here, the United States really should be more open to high-skilled immigrants. They're good for the economy, and an uptick in demonstrably uncontroversial immigrants might mitigate anxiety about the group as a whole. Another is that while there may be benefits to the tacit acceptance of undocumented immigration—the United States acquires an immigrant labour force without making any accommodations for the population—there are also foregone opportunities. One of these, compared to the Canadian approach, is in the United States's ability to foster integration through language training or other settlement programmes.

Yes, Immigration Hurts American Workers

Politico, By GEORGE J. BORJAS September/October 2016

The candidates tell drastically different stories about immigration. They're both skipping half the truth.

I've been studying immigration for 30 years, but 2016 was the first time my research was cited in a convention speech. When he accepted his party's nomination in July, Donald Trump used one of my economic papers to back up his plan to crack down on immigrants and build a physical wall: "Decades of record immigration have produced lower wages and

higher unemployment for our citizens, especially for African-American and Latino workers,” he told the cheering crowd. But he was telling only half the story.

Hillary Clinton, for her part, seemed to be telling only the other half. At her convention a week later, Clinton claimed that immigrants, both legal and illegal, improve the economy for everyone. She told the crowd: “I believe that when we have millions of hardworking immigrants contributing to our economy, it would be self-defeating and inhumane to try to kick them out. Comprehensive immigration reform will grow our economy.”

Here’s the problem with the current immigration debate: Neither side is revealing the whole picture. Trump might cite my work, but he overlooks my findings that the influx of immigrants can potentially be a net good for the nation, increasing the total wealth of the population. Clinton ignores the hard truth that not everyone benefits when immigrants arrive. For many Americans, the influx of immigrants hurts their prospects significantly.

This second message might be hard for many Americans to process, but anyone who tells you that immigration doesn’t have any negative effects doesn’t understand how it really works. When the supply of workers goes up, the price that firms have to pay to hire workers goes down. Wage trends over the past half-century suggest that a 10 percent increase in the number of workers with a particular set of skills probably lowers the wage of that group by at least 3 percent. Even after the economy has fully adjusted, those skill groups that received the most immigrants will still offer lower pay relative to those that received fewer immigrants.

Both low- and high-skilled natives are affected by the influx of immigrants. But because a disproportionate percentage of immigrants have few skills, it is low-skilled American workers, including many blacks and Hispanics, who have suffered most from this wage dip. The monetary loss is sizable. The typical high school dropout earns about \$25,000 annually. According to census data, immigrants admitted in the past two decades lacking a high school diploma have increased the size of the low-skilled workforce by roughly 25 percent. As a result, the earnings of this particularly vulnerable group dropped by between \$800 and \$1,500 each year.

We don’t need to rely on complex statistical calculations to see the harm being done to some workers. Simply look at how employers have reacted. A decade ago, Crider Inc., a chicken processing plant in Georgia, was raided by immigration agents, and 75 percent of its workforce vanished over a single weekend. Shortly after, Crider placed an ad in the local newspaper announcing job openings at higher wages. Similarly, the flood of recent news reports on abuse of the H-1B visa program shows that firms will quickly dismiss their current tech workforce when they find cheaper immigrant workers.

Immigration redistributes wealth from those who compete with immigrants to those who use immigrants—from the employee to the employer.

But that’s only one side of the story. Somebody’s lower wage is always somebody else’s higher profit. In this case, immigration redistributes wealth from those who compete with immigrants to those who use immigrants—from the employee to the employer. And the additional profits are so large that the economic pie accruing to all natives actually grows. I estimate the current “immigration surplus”—the net increase in the total wealth of the native population—to be about \$50 billion annually. But behind that calculation is a much larger shift from one group of Americans to another: The total wealth redistribution from the native losers to the native winners is enormous, roughly a half-trillion dollars a year. Immigrants, too, gain substantially; their total earnings far exceed what their income would have been had they not migrated.

When we look at the overall value of immigration, there’s one more complicating factor: Immigrants receive government assistance at higher rates than natives. The higher cost of all the services provided to immigrants and the lower taxes they pay (because they have lower earnings) inevitably implies that on a year-to-year basis immigration creates a fiscal hole of at least \$50 billion—a burden that falls on the native population.

What does it all add up to? The fiscal burden offsets the gain from the \$50 billion immigration surplus, so it’s not too farfetched to conclude that immigration has barely affected the total wealth of natives at all. Instead, it has changed how the pie is split, with the losers—the workers who compete with immigrants, many of those being low-skilled Americans—sending a roughly \$500 billion check annually to the winners. Those winners are primarily their employers. And the immigrants themselves come out ahead, too. Put bluntly, immigration turns out to be just another income redistribution program.

Once we understand immigration this way, it’s clear why the issue splits Americans—why many low-skilled native workers are taking one side, and why immigrants and businesses are taking another. Our immigration policy—any immigration policy—is ultimately not just a statement about how much we care about immigrants, but how much we care about one particular group of natives over another.

Is there a potential immigration policy that considers the well-being of all native Americans? Maybe so. It’s not a ban on immigrants, or even on low-skilled immigrants. High-skilled immigration really can make America wealthier. The steady influx of legal immigrants also produces more taxpayers, who can assist financially as the native population ages.

Then there's the matter of principle: Many Americans feel that it is a good thing to judiciously give some of "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses" a chance.

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But we're worrying about the wrong things, with policy fights focused on how many and which immigrants to accept, and not enough on how to mitigate the harm they create along the way.

To use a label recently coined by Larry Summers, a "responsible nationalist" policy cannot ignore the reality that immigration has made some natives poorer. A policy that keeps them in mind might tax the agricultural and service companies that benefit so much from low-skilled immigrants, and use the money to compensate low-skilled Americans for their losses and to help them transition to new jobs and occupations. Similarly, Bill Gates claims that Microsoft creates four new jobs for every H-1B visa granted; if true, firms like Microsoft should be willing to pay many thousands of dollars for each of those coveted visas. Those funds could be used to compensate and retrain the affected natives in the high-tech industry.

But let's not be naive. Policy fights over immigration have often been fierce, taking decades to get resolved. To even partially compensate those Americans who lose from the current policy would require massive new government programs to supervise a massive wealth redistribution totaling tens of billions of dollars. The employers that profit from the way things are won't go along with these transfers without an epic political struggle. And many of the libertarians who obsessively advocate for open borders will surely balk at such a huge expansion of government. To make this work, Clinton and her supporters will have to acknowledge that our current immigration policy has indeed left some Americans behind. And Trump and his supporters will have to acknowledge that a well-designed immigration plan can be beneficial. All this is probably not going to happen. But only then can we have a real debate over immigration policy.

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