

**Immigration and Nativism in the United States and Europe: Demography and
Globalization versus the Nation-State**

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Abstract

Prior to the nineteenth century, international borders were only approximately known and rarely policed. The creation of “nation-states,” in the late 19th and early 20th century was accompanied with a more formal regulation of international migration, especially of those who were not members of the dominant nation. With relatively youthful populations and a large rural labor reserve, many nation-states could afford to have restrictionist immigration policies. The relative lull of international migration during the 20th century, however, may have been an historical anomaly. The forces of a globalized world economy and an increasing spatial imbalance between the demographic supply and demand for labor are putting pressures on traditional systems of immigration restriction. Although there is not likely to be a return to completely open borders, the radical limitations on international movements that characterized much of the world in the mid-twentieth century are likely to fade in the coming decades.

<1>Introduction

In this essay, we review the immigration history of the United States as an illustrative example of the tensions between national identity and international migration. At various points throughout American history, there have been several efforts to limit immigration in order to retain the historical national identity of the country. But the volume and diversity of immigration eventually led to an assimilationist and subsequently to a pluralist definition of American identity.

The ideal of the nation-state, with every people (nation) having a homeland, is a modern concept that only began to take root in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Moreover, the highly regulated borders between countries and the routine inspection of passports for international migration are modern phenomena (Torpey, 2000: 7). Although nation-states create strong popular bonds of attachment and have almost unquestioned legitimacy in the modern world, the distribution of peoples is only imperfectly aligned with state boundaries. This creates an inevitable division between insiders—those to whom the state belongs—and outsiders—minorities who do not belong to the nation. Some minorities are indigenous with ancestral ties to the national territory, but their political and social status is typically marginalized by the official nationalist ideology. Other minorities are recent immigrants and their descendants. In some societies, immigrants and their descendants are a pariah group who are considered sojourners regardless of generations of residence. In other societies, the descendants of immigrants can become insiders, but only through acculturation and assimilation to the dominant nation. A third alternative is pluralism, which allows for cultural diversity within a framework of common citizenship and equal rights.

One of the defining attributes of modern nation-states is governance by citizens, but full citizenship is generally limited to members of the dominant nation. Empires, the dominant political formation prior to nation-states, were creations of conquest by monarchs who ruled through force and powerful symbolic systems that fostered fear and awe. Most empires had heterogeneous populations of subjects not citizens. Empires had roots stretching back to antiquity, but were increasingly anachronistic in the modern age. The legitimacy of autocratic monarchs declined with the spread of modern ideas that political sovereignty rests in the will of citizens. In spite of their long histories and powerful armies, empires were fragile constructs that were teeming with rebellious peoples and rivals scheming for power.

Following the turmoil of World War I, the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires were destroyed and new states were created following the principle that each people (nation) should have their own state. Beyond Europe and other regions of European settlement, the world moved in the opposite direction as imperialism spread its tentacles around the globe. The British, Dutch, French, and even latecomers such as the United States and Germany, sought to rule territories and peoples in Africa and Asia through conquest and stealth. The boundaries around most colonies resembled those of empires more than nation-states. The question of citizenship did not arise because colonial authorities monopolized political power and economic privilege. Power was enforced by mercenary armies and was legitimated with the powerful ideology of racism.

In the decades after World War II, colonial empires began to crumble, and some of the same struggles over nation-states were played out in Asia and Africa. Some former colonial empires emerged as multiethnic states, such as Indonesia and Burma while others fragmented. The Indian empire was divided into India and Pakistan and the latter was further divided with the

independence of Bangladesh. In the last decade of the century, the socialist empire of the Soviet Union finally collapsed and a large number of new nation-states appeared in Central Asia as well as in Eastern Europe. Many new states in Asia and Africa (as well as old states in Europe) are defined as nation-states, but confront many of the same problems with indigenous minority groups and immigration.

After a brief historical review of the political, economic, and demographic forces that have shaped long distance migration to empires and nation-states, we consider the evolution of national identity and immigration policies in the United States. Although the contemporary United States is seen as a “nation of immigrants,” the 18th century founders identified the nation as primarily those of English descent, or secondarily the peoples of Northwestern European descent who adopted the English language and culture as their own and professed a Protestant faith. Over the course of the last two centuries, there has been a continuing struggle between the forces of inclusion and nativism to define the American nation (Massey, 2007). In spite of restrictive immigration laws of the 1920s and the continuing nativist reaction against undocumented migrants, there has been sustained progress in broadening the definition of the American nation to be inclusive of peoples and cultures from many other lands, as well as the descendants of indigenous Americans and Spanish America and, most importantly, Americans of African origin. This struggle is far from complete, but the American experience may be of interest to other countries that are experiencing the conflicts between the need for increasing numbers of immigrants and the historical identity of a nation-state.

<1>Historical Perspective

Nation-states are generally the successors of empires or other premodern polities that were composed of multiethnic populations and migrants from distant lands. Empires were defined by

their centers—the city from where the monarch ruled. The boundaries of empires were, however, ill defined and probably oscillated with the power of the center to extract taxes and conscript labor from the periphery. The cities of empires were invariably multiethnic and drew peoples from a variety of distant locations.

<1>The first imperative for the openness of cities to migrants was simply survival or continuity. All premodern cities (with the exception of those in Japan), were extremely unhealthy and demographic sinkholes—mortality exceeded fertility by a wide margin (Wrigley, 1969; McNeill, 1976; Hanley, 1987). Cities required a continuous influx of labor from rural areas just to maintain their population.

The second imperative that encouraged migration to premodern cities was economic. Migrants from nearby rural areas may have been able to supply unskilled labor for construction, service, and defense, but skilled artisans and merchants were often drawn from distant and culturally distinct peoples. Knowledge of special skills (metal workers) and the talents to communicate/trade with distant empires and peoples made outsiders a valued resource (Thomaz, 1993: 77-82; Hoerder, 2002: Ch. 2). Multiethnic cities were not necessarily harmonious or even tolerant in premodern times, but social and cultural antagonisms were usually held in check because of common interests or by political force. The outbreak of violence and war was ruinous for fragile urban institutions and for the peoples in cities and the countryside (Hawley, 1971: 65-66).

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, demographic, economic, and political change transformed the world (Massey, 2005). The demographic transition (declining mortality followed after a lag by declining fertility) created unprecedented population growth, especially in

Europe. Population pressure stimulated waves of long distance migration, primarily to the New World, but also to other distant lands (Davis, 1974).

The era of industrialization was accompanied by the dissolution of empires, the rise and fall of imperialism, and the emergence of many new states. In many cases, state formation was based on the claim of nationalism, which usually implied an ethnic homeland for people with a putative claim of common descent. Nationalism has proven to be an extremely potent ideology of state building in the modern era. Indeed, the boundaries of Europe were redrawn after World War I to give many nations their own state, a policy legitimated by the ideology of national self-determination.

The high rates of domestic population growth in Europe meant that rural to urban migration within most nation states was sufficient for the manpower needs of industrialization. Continued high levels of long distance immigration were not a necessity for demographic survival or economic prosperity of most European states. The emergence of a system of fixed national borders, strict regulation of migrants, and defining “others” as outside of the political community of belonging seemed perfectly normal and reinforced the prejudices of nationalism and the nation state.

Surveying these developments, historian William H. McNeill (1984: 17) observed that the “barbarian ideal of an ethnically homogeneous nation is incompatible with the normal population dynamics of civilization.” According to McNeill, the European nineteenth century ideology of nation building (based on a single people in one country) was only realized by the coincidence of rapid population growth and the incorporation of regional peoples into a national myth of a common language and culture. The logic of nationalism was expressed by Hobsbawm (1992: 134) as “The homogeneous territorial nation could now be seen as a programme that

could only be realized by barbarians, or at least by barbarian means.” The problem identified by McNeill and Hobsbawm, is the uncertain political status of domestic minorities who do share membership in the dominant nation of a state as well as the dysfunctionality of closed borders in a world characterized by interdependence.

An inevitable by-product of nation-states is nationalism, which privileges a population defined by shared ancestry, language, or culture (including religion) as the preferred citizens of any state. The creation of nation states, however, conflicts with the reality that different cultural groups often share the same geography, especially in cities, and that state boundaries often ignore cultural divisions. This has led to new problems of national integration, second class citizenship, and contested national boundaries in many parts of the modern world. Those who do not belong to the nation in a nation-state have the limited options of voice, exit, or loyalty (Hirschman, 1970). Loyalty means acceptance of second class status as a minority or perhaps giving up one’s identity through assimilation to the dominant population. This is a real possibility, but the more common response is “voice,” which may mean a political or secessionist struggle to create a new nation-state. Exit may mean an exodus to the frontier or to another state where their ancestry matters less.

Just as nationalism was taking hold in Europe in the nineteenth century and beginning to spread around the globe, there were other forces that were expanding the numbers of the potential migrants and the feasibility of large scale long-distance population movements. The most important factors were the acceleration of population growth in many parts of the globe after 1750, opportunities for settlement in frontier societies, and the demand for labor in the emerging industrial economies. Population pressures, with growing numbers of people living at the margins of subsistence, were exacerbated with the commercialization of the agricultural

economy and displacement of peasants from the land. In different countries, famines, persecution, and pogroms added to the reasons for exodus in the nineteenth century.

These pressures combined with the cheapening costs of long distance travel increased the attractions of sparsely settled frontier areas, especially in the New World. All of these conditions led to massive waves of migrants crossing the Atlantic (and the Pacific) from the 16th to the 19th century (Hoerder, 2002). With the depopulation of the indigenous peoples through conquest and the spread of Old World diseases, the New World became the demographic and economic frontier that attracted long distance migrants from around the world, especially from Europe. The migration to the New World was monumental, both in its demographic size and the diversity of its origins. For the 75-year period from the mid nineteenth century to the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, almost 50 million Europeans came to the United States alone (Massey, 1988). In spite of some frictions, immigrants were generally welcomed in the New World. Labor was scarce and the endless frontier needed to be settled. Land grants, subsidized passage, and labor recruitment were among the strategies used to induce migrants at various times during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Zolberg, 2006).

<1>Immigration and National Identity in the United States

All Americans with the exception of American Indians are the descendents of immigrants. But some Americans, particularly those of English origin whose ancestors arrived prior to the American Revolution, have considered themselves to be the “native stock” of the American population (Baltzell, 1964). The American population has, however, always been much more diverse than the “Anglo-centric” image of the 18th century. The first American census in 1790, shortly after the formation of the United States, counted a bit less than 4 million people, of whom at least 20% were of African descent (Gibson and Jung, 2002). The estimates of

the non English-origin population in 1790 range from 20 to 40 percent (Akenson, 1984; McDonald and McDonald, 1980; and Purvis, 1984). There are no official figures on the numbers of American Indians prior to the late 19th century, but they were the dominant population of the 18th century in most of the territories that eventually became the United States. Almost all African Americans are the descendants of 17th or 18th century settlers while the majority of white Americans are descendants of immigrants who arrived in the 19th or 20th centuries (Gibson, 1992: 165; Edmonston and Passell, 1994: 61). Most Americans have acquired a sense of historical continuity from America's founding, but this is primarily the result of socialization and education, not descent.

Each new wave of immigration to the United States has met with some degree of hostility and fear from longer term residents that immigrants will harm American society or will not conform to the prevailing "American way of life." In 1751, Benjamin Franklin complained about the "Palatine Boors" who were trying to Germanize the province of Pennsylvania and refused to learn English (Archdeacon, 1983: 20).

Almost 70 million immigrants have arrived since the federal government began counting in 1820 (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006: 8). Although some level of immigration has been continuous throughout American history, there have been two epochal periods: the 1880 to 1924 Age of Mass Migration, primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe, and the Post 1965 Wave of Immigration, primarily from Latin America and Asia (Min, 2002; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). Each of these eras added more than 25 million immigrants, and the current wave is far from finished.

These historical trends and patterns are illustrated in Table 1, which shows the percent foreign born of the total population for each decennial census from 1850 and 1930 and from

1960 to 2000. For the same periods, Table 1 also shows the composition of immigrants by region of birth. These dates are selected to show the two major epochs of immigration, but also reflect the availability of data. Data on place of birth were first collected in 1850.

Table 1. Percent Foreign Born of the U.S. Population and Region of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population: 1850 to 1930 and 1960 to 2000

Year	Foreign Born	Total Population	Percent Foreign Born	Percent Distribution by Region of birth (for those reporting region of birth)						
				Total	Europe	Asia	Africa	Oceania	Latin America	Northern America
2000.....	31,107,889	281,421,906	11.1%	100.0%	15.8	26.4	2.8	0.5	51.7	2.7
1990.....	19,767,316	248,709,873	7.9%	100.0%	22.9	26.3	1.9	0.5	44.3	4.0
1980.....	14,079,906	226,545,805	6.2%	100.0%	39.0	19.3	1.5	0.6	33.1	6.5
1970.....	9,619,302	203,210,158	4.7%	100.0%	61.7	8.9	0.9	0.4	19.4	8.7
1960.....	9,738,091	179,325,671	5.4%	100.0%	75.0	5.1	0.4	0.4	9.4	9.8
1930.....	14,204,149	122,775,046	11.6%	100.0%	83.0	1.9	0.1	0.1	5.6	9.2
1920.....	13,920,692	105,710,620	13.2%	100.0%	85.7	1.7	0.1	0.1	4.2	8.2
1910.....	13,515,886	91,972,266	14.7%	100.0%	87.4	1.4	--	0.1	2.1	9.0
1900.....	10,341,276	75,994,575	13.6%	100.0%	86.0	1.2	--	0.1	1.3	11.4
1890.....	9,249,547	62,622,250	14.8%	100.0%	86.9	1.2	--	0.1	1.2	10.6
1880.....	6,679,943	50,155,783	13.3%	100.0%	86.2	1.6	--	0.1	1.3	10.7
1870.....	5,567,229	38,558,371	14.4%	100.0%	88.8	1.2	--	0.1	1.0	8.9
1860.....	4,138,697	31,443,321	13.2%	100.0%	92.1	0.9	--	0.1	0.9	6.0
1850.....	2,244,602	23,191,876	9.7%	100.0%	92.2	0.1	--	--	0.9	6.7

Source:
Gibson and Jung. 2006. Tables 1 and 2.

In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, and after two decades of mass migration from Ireland and Germany, over 13% of the 31 million Americans were of foreign birth. Throughout the 19th century, Irish and German Americans, especially Catholics, were not considered to be fully American by old stock Americans in terms of culture or status. In May 1844, there were three days of rioting in Kensington, an Irish suburb of Philadelphia, which culminated in the burning of two Catholic Churches and other property (Archdeacon, 1983: 81). This case was one incident of many during the 1840s and 1850s when Catholic churches and convents were destroyed and priests were attacked by Protestant mobs (Daniels, 1991: 267-268).

These antipathies crystallized in the "Know Nothing Party" (the internal name was the "American" party), which in 1855 elected six governors and sent a number of representatives to

Congress (Jones 1992:134). Their expressed philosophy was simply that of "Americanism," which implicitly communicated the fear of the unAmericaness of immigrants. (Higham, 1988: 4). Popular support for the Know Nothing Party collapsed in the 1860s when immigrants played a disproportionate role as soldiers for the Union Army.

Immigration increased during the last half of the 19th century. During some of the peak years of immigration in the early 1900s, about one million immigrants arrived annually, which was more than one percent of the total U.S. population at the time. As a percent of the total population, the percent foreign born fluctuated from 13 to 14% during the Age of Mass Migration. If the children of immigrants were counted, more than a quarter of the American population was part of the immigrant community. Since immigrants were disproportionately drawn to jobs in urban areas, the majority of the population in most American cities, especially industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest, were composed of immigrants and their children during the 19th and early 20th century.

With cutoff of immigration in the 1920s, the proportion foreign born and even the absolute numbers of immigrants declined precipitously in subsequent decades. The 1960 and 1970 censuses counted less than 10 million immigrants—less than one in twenty Americans. With a loosening of immigration restrictions in the 1960s, there was a renewal of mass immigration in the last few decades of the 20th century. By the 2000 census, there were over 30 million foreign born persons in the United States—the highest level ever recorded. But with a total U.S. population of almost 300 million, the relative impact is much lower than in earlier times. The percent foreign born in 2000 was only a little over 11%. The numbers of immigrants in the late 20th century is only high relative to the early post World War II era when immigration was at its nadir. In comparison to most of the 19th century, and the early decades of the 20th

century, however, contemporary immigration appears to be “normal”—very similar to the generally high level of immigration throughout most of American history.

Table 1 shows that there has been a major change in the sources of immigrants in recent decades. Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, upwards of 80% of immigrants came from Europe and most of the rest were from Canada (Northern America). In recent decades, however, the European and Canadian share has dropped below 20%. About half of recent immigrants come from Latin America (broadly defined to include the Caribbean, Mexico, Central and South America and about ¼ from Asia). This historical comparison, however, is somewhat misleading.

There was considerable heterogeneity in the national origins of European immigrants during the Age of Mass Migration. Many immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were considered “non-white according to the widely accepted racial theories of the day (Higham, 1988). For American nativists, the national identity of the United States was still rooted in “old stock” Americans of English Protestant descent. There has always been considerable ambivalence about the magnitude and character of immigration to the United States. There has been general recognition that more people were necessary to settle the frontier, work in the factories, and play other necessary roles, but there were also fears that immigrants might change the composition and character of American society.

Some of the major landmarks of U. S. immigration legislation are listed in Table 2. This list includes only a few of the major changes in laws and agreements that have shaped American immigration policies. More comprehensive accounts of immigration policies are presented in Bernard (1981) and Hutchinson (1981) and most recently in the comprehensive account and analysis by Zolberg (2006).

Table 2. Major Landmarks in U.S. Immigration Legislation.

1790	Naturalization Act of 1790	restricted naturalization to "free white persons" of "good moral character"
1865	14th Amendment	all persons bornin the United States.....are citizens of the United States" interpreted as "jus soli"
1882	Chinese Exclusion Act	excluded Chinese laborers, renewed in 892 and made permanent in 1902
1907	Gentlemen's Agreement	agreement with Japan to restrict Japanese immigration to the U.S.
1917	Immigration Act of 1917	literacy requirement
1921	Emergency Quota Act	enacted national origin quotas based on 1910 census
1924	Johnson-Reed Act	substituted 1890 census as reference for quotas; established numerical limits
1952	McCarran-Walter Act	reaffirmed national origin quotas; established quota for needed skills
1965	Hart-Cellar Act	repealed national origin quotas; established visa preferences for family reunification and skills
1980	Refugee Act	established systematic procedures for refugees using the UN definition of refugees
1986	Immigration Reform and Control Act	Employer sanctions, amnesty for some illegal immigrants, increased border enforcement

Source: Smith and Edmonston. 1997: 22-30
Zolberg 2006

In the early years of the republic, Congress passed the 1790 Naturalization Act that established the terms of eligibility of citizenship for “free white persons of good moral character.” Although race had not been directly mentioned in the founding documents in the American Republic (Declaration of Independence and the Constitution), the limitation of naturalized citizenship to whites reveals a definition of national identity that excludes American

Indians as well as persons of African and Asian origin. In the following decade, there were several revisions to the terms of the naturalization procedures, including the infamous “Alien and Sedition Act” of 1798 that (among other things) raised the residency requirement for naturalization to 14 years. This was shortly reduced to 5 years.

Generally, the period prior to 1882 is considered to be an “open door era” for immigration (Bernard, 1981: 488) but the detailed scholarship by Zolberg (2006) reveals a more nuanced interpretation. One of the most important aspects of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, one of the three post Civil War Amendments, was a broad definition of American citizenship that included the former slaves and all persons born in the United States—“*jus soli*.” This right, which is uncommon in most European and Asian countries, has been of paramount importance in allowing the descendants of immigrants to have equal rights with old stock Americans.

The first American effort to close the door to immigration was directed against Chinese on the West Coast in the 1870s (Saxton, 1971). By 1882, the anti-Chinese coalition had become so strong that Congress passed, and then President Chester A. Arthur signed, a bill that was popularly known as the “Chinese Exclusion Act” (Hutchinson, 1981:77-84). Although the facts of immigration restriction are clear, the motivations for it are still debated. There is no doubt that the anti-Chinese sentiments were thoroughly infused with racial ideology. Popular prejudices against Asians were openly expressed in newspapers and by most political leaders (Saxton, 1971, Daniels, 1977). The fact that a similar prohibition was enacted against Japanese immigrants (the so called “Gentleman’s Agreement” of 1907) reveals that race was a primary concern.

The question is whether racism was the primary reason or just a convenient ideology for those who had genuine fears of economic competition with the new immigrants. In her theory of

the "split labor market," Edna Bonacich (1972, 1984) argued that much of the antagonism and discrimination against Asian immigrants by working class whites, who led the movement for immigration bars, was based on fears that Asian immigrants' willingness to work for very low wages undercut the incomes of white workers.

The movement to exclude Chinese (and other Asian) immigration to the United States was not a singular event. In his book, *The Great White Walls are Built*, Charles Price (1974) describes how similar restrictive immigration laws were passed in Australia and Canada. Moreover, the restrictions on Asian immigration foreshadowed the movement to exclude immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe to the United States, which culminated with the "national origins" quotas in the 1920s.

The movement to restrict European migration to the United States was a complex phenomenon that extended for several decades with strange political, economic, and ethnic alliances on both sides. The standard economic account posits capital and labor as the main protagonists with business and employer groups advocating free immigration and workers arguing the opposite. There were, however, many other sides to the debate. Immigrant communities, particularly in big cities, were a strong political force against immigration restriction, while Congressional representatives from rural areas were generally opposed to open immigration.

Perhaps the most important force moving the United States toward limits on immigration was the rising tide of nativism—the fear of foreigners, which gradually became intertwined with racial ideology in the first two decades of the twentieth century. American nativism had deep roots in anti-Catholicism and a fear of foreign radicals, but the belief in the inherent superiority of the Anglo-Saxon "race" became the dominant element of the ideology in the late nineteenth

century (Higham, 1988: Chapter 1). These beliefs and the link to immigration restriction had widespread support among many well-educated elites. The Immigration Restriction League, founded by young Harvard-educated Boston Brahmins in 1894, advocated a literacy test to slow the tide of immigration (Bernard, 1980: 492). It was thought that a literacy test would reduce immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, which was sending an "alarming number of illiterates, paupers, criminals, and madman who endangered American character and citizenship" (Higham, 1988: 103).

For three decades, the battle over immigration restriction was waged in the courts of public opinion and in Congress. In 1910, the Dillingham Commission (a congressionally appointed commission named after Senator William P. Dillingham of Vermont) issued a 42 volume report, which assumed the racial inferiority of the new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe relative to the old stock immigrants from Northwestern Europe (Bernard, 1980:492). Social Darwinism and scientific racism were in full flower with many leading scholars warning against allowing further immigration of "beaten members of beaten breeds" (Jones, 1992: 228-230).

When the passage of a literacy test in 1917 did not have the intended impact of slowing immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, Congress passed the Emergency Quota Act in 1921 to limit the number of annual immigrants from each country to three percent of the foreign-born of that nationality in the 1910 Census (Bernard, 1980: 492-493). These provisions were not strong enough for some restrictionists, who passed another immigration law in 1924 (the Johnson Reed Act) that pushed the quotas back to two percent of each nationality counted in the 1890 census, a date before the bulk of the new immigrants had arrived. The policy then led to the "national origins quotas," which were based on very dubious means of estimating the national

origins of the American population (Higham, 1988: 316-324; Anderson, 1988: 140-149). There were no quotas allocated for Asian countries and no mention of any possible immigration from Africa.

Timmer and Williamson (1998) argue that the immigration restrictions that took hold in the United States and many other countries about the same time in the early decades of the twentieth century were primarily motivated by economic considerations and not by xenophobia or racism. There is some evidence that immigration from poorer areas might have slowed gains of domestic workers (Hatton and Williamson, 1998; however see Carter and Sutch, 1998), and that the political alliances that did finally lead to immigration restriction were shaped, at least in part, by fears of competition with immigrant workers (Goldin, 1994). Although restrictive policies were clearly formulated to address the fears of wage competition of American workers, the conclusion that this was the *only* causal variable seems to ignore the highly charged ideological climate of the era of immigration restriction.

Nationalism and racism were the reigning ideologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although not every political outcome was determined by these ideologies, they did shape the immigration policy agenda in fundamental ways. In the United States, racial arguments were used by politicians, scholars and the mass media to convince the American public and the government that the historically open door of immigration should be closed (Higham, 1988). This was not an easy case to make in a country whose identity was that of a "nation of immigrants." It took several decades of overt anti-immigrant rhetoric and a broad political coalition before the U. S. Congress was able to pass restrictive immigration legislation that closed the door to mass immigration.

Another factor that probably helped to turn the tide against an open system of international migration was the increasing rate of population growth. For most of the nineteenth century, migration had been a necessity because of the high mortality in cities and a general shortage of labor to settle the frontier and to work in the factories of the new industrial age. With declining levels of mortality in the early twentieth century, most countries were generally able to meet their labor needs from natural increase. In such circumstances, the nationalist and racial impulses were, perhaps, given a freer hand to regulate immigration policies over the middle decades of the twentieth century.

<1>The Immigration Door Begins to Open

The imposition of the national origins quotas in the 1920s, followed by the Great Depression and World War II, lowered immigration to its lowest levels since the early decades of the nineteenth century. The "racial" character of the national origins quotas was exemplified by the very limited numbers of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany who were allowed to enter the United States while the quotas for Great Britain were not utilized. After World War II, U.S. immigration policies came into conflict with America's new leadership role in the international system. If American political ideals were to influence other countries, the discriminatory character of the national origins quotas could be held up as an example of hypocrisy. In vetoing the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act of 1952 (which reaffirmed the national origins quota system), President Truman stated:

"The quota system—always based upon assumptions at variance with our American ideals—is long since out of date....The greatest vice of the present system, however, is it discriminates, deliberately and intentionally, against many of the peoples of the world.....It is incredible to me that, in this year of 1952, we should be enacting into law

such a slur on the patriotism, the capacity, and the decency of a large part of our citizenry" (quoted in Keely, 1979: 17-18).

Congress overrode Truman's veto, and the national origins quota remained the law of the land for another 13 years. The domestic and international pressures for immigration reform continued to grow with each passing year. The dam finally broke with the landslide 1964 election, which brought a reform minded Congress into office. Among the major pieces of Great Society legislation passed was the 1965 Immigration Act, which was championed by a number of senior members of Congress who were the children of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

The 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act replaced the national origins quota system with a new preference system based on the principles of family reunification and skills. In the decades following the 1965 Immigration Act, there have been a series of new laws that have modified the numerical limits and procedures of immigration and the admission of refugees (Smith and Edmondston, 1997: 22-30). In general, these reforms have liberalized immigration to expand the numbers and to create more possibilities for admission.

The sponsors of the 1965 Immigration Act were primarily interested in allowing a freer flow of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, the countries hit hardest by the national origins quotas. The primary response, however, has been a major immigration flow from Asia. The first wave of Asian immigrants in the late 1960s and early 1970s were able to utilize the provisions allowing for those in skilled occupations of high demand (nurses, engineers, doctors, etc.) to enter. These early arrivals were then able to use the family reunification criterion to sponsor their relatives. At about the same time, there was a major new wave of immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico and Cuba.

There have been a series of further changes in immigration laws and policies in the 1980s and 1990s in response to new development and controversies. One of the most important was the Refugee Act of 1980 that created a regular avenue for refugee arrivals. Prior to 1980, there were ad hoc responses to refugee crises. The 1980 legislation also adopted the United Nations definition of a refugee as a person with a well founded fear of persecution.

After many years of debate, Congress passed the 1986 Immigration and Control Act (IRCA) that attempted to balance several of the major immigration controversies. Illegal immigrants who had been in the United States for a long time were allowed to stay and were given a path toward citizenship. The other provisions of IRCA were to stop further illegal immigration by hardening the border (walls, fences, more guards) and by imposing sanctions against employers who knowingly employ illegal immigrants. In spite of the well meaning intentions of IRCA, the policy has been a colossal failure (Massey, Durand, and Malone, 2002)

The movement to a less restrictive policy of immigration to the United States has been paralleled by comparable reforms in other countries. In the early 1970s, Australia ended its "White Australia" policy and allowed significant numbers of Asians to immigrate. In the early 1990s, the countries of the European Common Market loosened restrictions on inter-state migration. Citizens of any country in the European Common Market can move to any other country and are free to seek employment or attend schooling on equal terms with natives of the country. The appearance of these common patterns in a number of countries and regions suggests that the nationalist impulse, which sought to limit and control international migration, was waning during the last few decades of the twentieth century.

Underlying the change in immigration policies were broad economic and demographic forces in advanced industrial countries. Population growth has slowed, and there is a shortage of

native-born persons who are willing to work in lowly paid positions in the economy, including seasonal agricultural labor. Population aging, the other major demographic trend, has also contributed a slowing rate of growth (an absolute decline in some countries) of population in the working ages. These domestic trends have been complemented with a virtually unlimited supply of potential immigrant labor, sometimes skilled and always highly motivated from developing countries.

The net result has been an increase in immigration in most industrial countries over the last few decades of the twentieth century. Distinctly different patterns emerged in Europe and the United States. Many European countries adopted "guest worker" programs, which were intended to be temporary stays by workers from the labor surplus countries of Southern Europe and North Africa. Guest workers were generally not eligible for citizenship and were expected to return home when their contracts were completed. The United States maintained a formal immigration framework, whereby legal immigrants could apply for citizenship after five years, but also tolerated a parallel system of "illegal immigration."

Both policies reflect an unwillingness to acknowledge the realities of international migration. Most temporary workers did not return home, and they often brought their families and became permanent residents of the host society. The relative openness of the U.S. society to illegal or "undocumented immigration," has led to the conclusion that efforts to regulate immigration are primarily symbolic. Understanding the "failure" of immigration policies requires looking beyond mistaken assumptions and inadequate enforcement to see how deeply embedded international migration has become in the modern world economy.

The magnitude of immigrants in the American economy is shown in Table 3, which presents recent (2004) figures on the labor force of persons age 16 and over, sub-divided into

employed and unemployed by immigrant generation and sex. The first generation includes the foreign born, the second generation includes the children of immigrants, and the balance of the population is included as part of the third and higher generations.

SEX AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Total		GENERATION ²					
	Number	Percent	FIRST		SECOND		THIRD-AND-HIGHER	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Civilian Labor Force	146,062	100.0	21,168	100.0	9,719	100.0	115,175	100.0
Employed	137,151	93.9	19,857	93.8	9,083	93.5	108,211	94.0
Unemployed	8,910	6.1	1,310	6.2	636	6.5	6,964	6.0
Total Male Civilian Labor Force	77,860	100.0	12,736	100.0	5,131	100.0	59,993	100.0
Employed	72,739	93.4	12,001	94.2	4,744	92.5	55,995	93.3
Unemployed	5,121	6.6	735	5.8	387	7.5	3,998	6.7
Total Female Civilian Labor Force	68,202	100.0	8,432	100.0	4,588	100.0	55,182	100.0
Employed	64,412	94.4	7,857	93.2	4,339	94.6	52,216	94.6
Unemployed	3,789	5.6	575	6.8	249	5.4	2,966	5.4

¹ Employment status refers to reference week of the survey.

² The foreign born are considered first generation. Natives with either parent born in a foreign country are considered second generation. Natives with neither parent born in a foreign country are considered third-and-higher generation.

Source:
U.S. Census Bureau. 2004

There are about 137 million jobs in the American economy—as measured by the total number of employed persons. Almost 20 million of these jobs are held by immigrants (or 29 million if the children of immigrants are included). If immigrants were competing with native born workers, this huge number of immigrants would adversely affect the employment prospects of native born workers. However, the unemployment rate of the 3rd and higher generation workers is only 6%—a very low rate in historical perspective. It seems that the economic role of

immigrants is additive and does not subtract from the opportunities of native born workers (Card, 2005; Carter and Sutch, 2006).

The unemployment rates of immigrants are comparable to those of the native born population. These aggregate figures are not completely comparable because of differences in age composition, but there do not appear to be significant differences.

Popular attitudes toward immigration remain ambivalent. The prejudices against immigrants and nativist fears have not disappeared, but their open expression has been sharply reduced. These changes in economics, demography, labor demand, and ideology have contributed to a much freer flow of international labor migration in the late twentieth century (Castles and Miller, 1998; Massey et al., 1998).

<1>International Migration in the Twenty-First Century

The contradictions between tightly regulated international borders and the modern world economy are becoming increasingly clear. Most immigration policies, of whatever type, are residues of the first half of the twentieth century, when regulated borders were a hallmark of modern statecraft. If the role of a state was to promote the welfare of the national population (a group defined by descent or membership), then a clear objective was to keep others (non-members of the nation) out, or to keep the numbers of immigrants to very modest levels. Policies of tightly regulated borders developed in nineteenth century nation-building states, initially in Europe and then spread around the globe in the twentieth century, including the traditional immigrant receiving societies in the New World and Oceania.

These policies "worked" because domestic population growth in most countries was sufficient to meet labor demand. Indeed, population growth reached record levels everywhere in the twentieth century. Although rapid population growth created immense pressures in many

labor surplus countries, there were few places that needed additional labor or allowed open migration. Passport controls were expensive and irksome to many, but they became accepted as normal features of modern states. Over the last few decades of the twentieth century, however, strains in the system of tight immigration policies were beginning to show.

The first sign was "labor demand" in industrial countries that could not be met by domestic supply, at least not at the wages offered. Employers found it more desirable to import labor from abroad than to raise wages or to mechanize production. If this pattern were found in only one country or in only a few sectors, then it might be possible to consider a fairly narrow explanation in terms of political cultures or market rigidities. The demand for "cheaper immigrant labor," however, spans many sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, construction, repair services, restaurants, and child care) in most industrial countries, including a growing number of rapidly developing countries. The increasingly global international economy seems to create recurrent needs for labor greater than that available from domestic population growth.

The demand for immigrant labor is not restricted to unskilled manual labor. The United States and other industrial countries have encountered a shortage of scientific and engineering workers, particularly in the high tech sector. This demand has been met, in part, by allowing many talented foreign students in American universities to convert their student visas to immigrant status. There has also been a gradual shift over the last few decades to more open immigration policies for a variety of reasons—refugees, agricultural workers, "illegal" immigrants with long residences in the country, peoples in countries that have too few American citizen relatives to sponsor them, and workers in high demand by U.S. employers.

These moves toward more liberal immigration policies in the United States are part of a broader international context with comparable patterns emerging in other countries. The policy

of free movement of citizens in the European Common Market is the most striking example, but there are trends toward generous policies of admitting refugees and temporary workers in many parts of the world. There are even a few examples of more generous citizenship policies, but these are halting, often facing a domestic backlash from nationalist sentiments that have been weakened, but not disappeared (Lucassen, 2005).

More liberal immigration policies appear to be highly functional in modern industrial and postindustrial societies. Standard economic theory posits that domestic migration is a functional response to wage differentials between areas. Migration allows for workers to benefit from higher wages in growing areas and stimulates the economy to operate more efficiently by creating larger and more porous labor and consumer markets. Indeed the logic for lessening barriers to migration is similar to that of international free trade. Economic theory suggests that all countries benefit from the free flows of capital, goods, and technology across international borders. International migration is often excluded from discussions about expanding international trade (such as in the NAFTA debate), largely because of political considerations rather than economic theory (Massey, Durand, and Malone, 2002).

Globalization is the most powerful trend in the world today. There are few places on Earth that are not exposed to the presence of the international forces of the mass media, multinational corporations, and Hollywood images. Every commodity from fresh food to electronic products moves around the globe in such profusion that most persons are unaware of the nationality of the producers of the goods (and services) they consume. Although international trade has always created competition between businesses and workers in different countries, the current era with instantaneous communication and cheap transportation has created a qualitatively new international community. In this setting, barriers to international labor mobility

are an anachronism of the earlier era. Just as most countries, regardless of political ideology, have striven to make passport lines more efficient in recent times to encourage the very profitable tourist sector, it seems that most twenty-first century societies will ease immigration barriers in order to profit from the increasingly globalized world economy.

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