INTRODUCTION
According to the conventional wisdom, migration, and international migration in particular, is a major problem in today’s world. This perspective holds that migration is primarily a product of economic and political crises that push people to leave their homelands, usually involuntarily. With the emphasis on push factors as the primary cause of migration, this interpretation points to the problems of social and economic dislocation at the place of destination. Migrants tend to crowd into cities, where they become an underclass exploited by unscrupulous employers and landlords. In addition to creating social problems, migrants are alleged to lower wage standards and to take jobs from domestic workers. According to this critical viewpoint, out-migration does not even produce positive outcomes in the place of origin. Because migration is selective of the most able and talented youth, the “brain drain” may even worsen the prospects for socioeconomic development in the sending areas.

The rhetoric about the migration problem is often escalated to the crisis level with claims about uncontrolled borders and silent invasions, especially if the migration is surreptitious and border controls are avoided. These views are routinely expressed by many American political leaders and policy makers as well as by some political voices in Europe and Asia.

Migration researchers typically question many of the premises of this critical perspective. The starting point is a consideration of “pull” factors as well as “push” forces. According to economic theory, migration is a normal response to the mismatch between the spatial distribution of people and opportunities. The presumption is that free mobility of labor has a similar logic to the argument for free trade. Free trade is considered to maximize economic opportunities and wealth in the long run, although the benefits are often unevenly distributed in the short term.
There is not a clear consensus among migration researchers on the benefits and costs of international migration, nor is there unanimity on policy prescriptions, for example, whether the United States should have a more liberal or restrictive immigration policy. The one common thread in the field is a commitment to the empirical evaluation of the potential effects of migration, including the micro-effects on migrants and the macro-effects on communities of destination and origin. It is expected that there will be considerable variation in the effects of migration at different times and places and for different groups. Theoretical orientations are a valuable source of ideas, but conclusions are based on well crafted empirical studies.

In this essay, I review some of the significant research literature on the determinants and consequences of international migration, with a primary focus on the American experience. Any review of the literature is inevitably selective and mine is no exception. I emphasize some of the evidence on the positive outcomes and effects of migration, in part, to provide some balance to the overly negative views expressed in the conventional wisdom described in the opening paragraph. After a historical overview, I address the following questions.

Why do people move?
What is the impact of long distance migration on migrants?
How does large-scale immigration affect receiving societies and communities?
What is the impact of emigration on the people left behind in places of origin?

The links between international and national security depend, in large part, on the breadth of national security considerations. A narrow definition of national security, which emphasizes minimizing risk, could lead to the conclusion that all international movements, exchanges, and contacts bring potential danger. National security, however, is also defined by the economic and social welfare of the nation’s inhabitants as well as the respect and esteem of the United States by governments and peoples abroad. From this broader perspective, international migration, and the image of the United States as a nation of immigrants might enhance national security. The potential contribution and
risks of international migration on national security are discussed in the concluding section of this essay.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
Is the present era unique? In a widely cited book, Castles and Miller (1998) label the current period as “Age of Migration.” In absolute numbers, this is certainly true. Based on a recent United Nations report, which defines international migrants as persons who live outside their country of birth, there are currently about 175 million international migrants—approximately double the estimated number in 1975 (United Nations 2002).¹

The United States is currently experiencing the highest absolute levels of immigration in history, predominately from Latin America and Asia. After several centuries of exporting excess population, most of western and northern Europe has been a region of labor absorption from Southern Europe and its periphery for several decades. Ireland, Portugal, Spain and many other European countries have been countries of immigration in recent decades. Even Japan, which has usually been an exceptional case with almost no immigration, has accepted a substantial influx of Brazilians of Japanese ancestry and an increasing number of long term workers from neighboring Asian countries.

International migration is not simply the movement of people from developing to developed economies. Over 40 percent of those who have crossed international boundaries currently reside in developing countries. The Middle East has attracted millions of temporary labor migrants from South and Southeast Asia. There are reported to be hundreds of thousands of Indonesians working in Malaysia and tens of thousand Burmese have been drawn into employment in northern Thailand. Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan have drawn Filipinos, Thais, and many others to work as laborers and domestic servants. Comparable international flows are reported in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Added to these patterns of voluntary labor migration, the world is frequently beset with refugees fleeing war, violence, political persecution, and

¹ However, 175 million is only about 3 percent of the total world’s population of more than 6 billion.
economic deprivation around the globe. The United Nations estimates there are about 16 million refuges around the globe (United Nations 2002).

This view of the present era as unique must be balanced with the awareness that long-distance migration is as old as humankind (Davis, 1974, McNeill 1978). Although some views of human history paint a portrait of immobile communities wedded to the land and local villages over the millennia, only to be disrupted by modern civilizations and global capitalism, this is a very partial view. Local communities did persist over long stretches of human history, but the peoples who inhabited them were connected to frontier regions and cities though periodic waves of out-migration in times of population surplus. Moreover, local villages and communities were periodically subjected to conquest that led to displacement, enslavement, or absorption into dominant populations. Patterns of uneven population growth, environmental changes, and technological differences between populations inevitably made migration, voluntary and involuntary, a recurrent feature of human societies throughout history.

These patterns of population movement, however, were rarely regulated by state policies. Prior to the rise of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the primary forms of state organization in the world were empires and kingdoms ruled by absolutist monarchs. Empires were defined by their centers—the city 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. The primary imperative for the openness of cities to migrations was survival. With the exception of Japan, concentrations of populations in ancient and medieval cities inevitably led to high levels of mortality far in excess of natural increase. Cities required a continuous influx of labor from rural areas just to maintain their population. Moreover, workers for various urban roles, including artisans, traders, slaves, and soldiers, were often imported or recruited from distant, culturally distinct peoples. These multiethnic cities were not necessarily harmonious or even tolerant, but social and cultural
antagonisms were usually held in check because of common interests or by political force.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the political map of the world was transformed with 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 a claim of nationalism, which usually implied an ethnic homeland or a sense of belonging to a common people. Nationalism has proven to be an extremely potent ideology of state building in the modern era. 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. One of the outcomes of this process was the increasing regulation of national borders and barriers to open immigration.

The United States was a latecomer to immigration restriction. Except for a brief episode in the late 18th century (the “alien sedition act”), immigration was largely unrestricted until the 1920s. 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 (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. Not everyone came voluntarily. It is estimated that more than ten million Africans were transported as slaves to the Caribbean and to North and South America (Klein 1999: 208-211).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, some of occasional fears and antagonisms against immigrants were beginning to coalesce into social movements. In the decades prior to the American Civil War, there was a substantial movement against Catholic immigrants, particularly from Ireland, in several American states. 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 the President Chester A. Arthur signed, a bill that was popularly known as the "Chinese Exclusion Act" (Hutchinson 1981:77-84).

The movement to restrict European migration to the United States, from the late 19th century and the early 20th century, was composed of an unusual collection of political, economic, and ethnic bedfellows. 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. 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 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 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 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 very limited numbers of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany who were allowed to enter the United States while the quotas for Great
Britain were under-utilized exemplified the discriminatory character of the national origins quotas. 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 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 Edmonston 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.

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 (Price 1974). 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.

WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?
The answer to this question may seem obvious. Economic theory posits that people behave in rational ways to improve their socioeconomic well-being. Questions put to migrants about the reasons for their movement invariably elicit responses that focus on economic motivations, sometimes phrased in terms of improving the lives of their children. If the prospect for economic gains is the primary motive for migration, then the real question is why there is so little migration. As noted by a scholar in the field, migrants do not flow as easily as water down an incline. Inertia, the lack of information about opportunities elsewhere, and the normal human preference for the familiarity of family and community mean that most people are reluctant to migrate even in the face of strong incentives.
Indeed, long distance migration is a fairly rare event. In the United States, one of the most highly mobile societies in the world, the average number of interstate moves (a proxy for long distance migration) is only about twice in a lifetime (Long 1988). An average, however, conceals wide variations—many persons spend their lives in close proximity to their place of birth while a smaller minority moves frequently. Consequently, most research focuses on the reasons for the variations in migration between individuals within the same community and the variations between regions and countries.

If maximum economic gain is the primary predictor of migration, then the poorest people from the poorest countries would be the most likely to migrate long distances. However, neither of predictions is true. Poverty is generally a deterrent to migration (Portes and Rumbaut 1996: Chapter 1). Poor people lack information about opportunities elsewhere and the resources necessary to finance a move. Migration, especially long distance migration, requires planning and the ability to pay for transportation and maintenance during the journey and the settling in stage at the destination. Many poor people have debts and social obligations that tie them to a place.

Most migrants, including international migrants, come from the middle ranks of the sending society. The people at the top have little motivation to move and those at the bottom lack the wherewithal to consider migration. Although peasants without the prospect of inheriting land are often over-represented among migrants, they usually have some education and skills and also have (or can borrow) sufficient resources to cover the costs of migration. Migrants are also “selective” in terms of youth and have other personal characteristics that led them to have high ambitions and perseverance.

Just as migrants are rarely the poorest people, labor migration is low in the poorest countries and in the poorest regions of poor countries. In very poor societies, peasants

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2 Long distance migration should not be equated with the more common patterns of changing of residence within local areas. The contemporary American changes homes about 10 to 12 times over the course of her or his lifetime, but most of these are short distance moves necessitated by leaving home, marriage, having children, and change in housing needs.
(and others) are usually tied to the land through social obligations to kin and patrons that make migration almost impossible to consider. Poor peasants in traditional societies have a “place” (in the social order) and an expectation of sufficient income to survive (though hardship was normal).

Labor migration originates in societies that are undergoing change. For example, mass migration from Europe to the United States began in England, Scotland, and Ireland in the 18th and early 19th century as peasants and urban workers lost their farms and jobs through land enclosure, the commercialization of agriculture, and the decline of handicraft manufacture through competition from trade. During this period, there was little motivation for emigration from the much poorer countries in southern and eastern Europe.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, mass labor migration began from eastern and southern Europe to the United States (and other destinations) as the economies of these countries began to stir. Although the labor needs of the American economy provided the “pull,” there were parallel economic and social changes that provided the “push.” The development of industry, commercial agriculture, and a capitalist economy led to the erosion of traditional social institutions that provide a subsistence floor. In addition to migration to distant shores, many displaced peasants and workers migrated to regional cities and adapted by looking for new jobs, and changed their demographic behavior.

In the late 20th century, migration pressures are greatest in Latin American, Asian, and African countries with rapidly growing populations, eroding traditional sectors, and insufficient opportunities in the modern sector. Mexico and the Philippines are examples of countries that are modernizing, but not fast enough to absorb all the youthful workers seeking employment.

Once the economies of modernizing countries begun to generate more jobs (and good jobs with incomes to allow for social mobility), the pressures for international migration are reduced. When the barriers to immigration to the United States were eased in the
1960s, there was not much interest in mass migration from Italy, Greece, and other European sending countries. Migration from Korea to the United States slowed in the 1990s (relative to earlier decades) as the Korean economy began to approach developed country standards.

Economic motivations and modernization are not the only forces that create the conditions for mass migration. Political revolutions, climatic changes, and religious persecution are also important stimuli for emigration, but these vary in ways that are less predictable than the changes that accompany industrialization and modernization.

International migration is one many common features of countries in the early stages of modernization. The spread of education, domestic migration to cities, postponement of marriage and fertility, and the formation of political movements are some of the other aspects that most societies experience with social change. As economies develop, the pressures for mass external migration usually recede.

WHAT HAPPENS TO IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN?
Because immigrant and ethnic neighborhoods persist over time, there is often a perception of very slow assimilation of migrant populations. For example, most visitors to Chinatown in San Francisco or New York see virtually the same community decade after decade. What is less visible, however, is the turnover of people within these ethnic communities. The children of immigrants, once they reach adulthood, rarely settle in immigrant neighborhoods. Even with the immigrant generation, economic mobility usually leads to geographic mobility to the suburbs. Ethnic neighborhoods persist primarily as places of settlement for recent immigrants. If a particular immigration stream slows, the traditional places of settlement are transformed (by a different immigrant population) or they are maintained as cultural relics for tourism (Little Italy in New York and the North Beach area in San Francisco).

This brief account of ethnic neighborhoods is illustrative of the experience of European immigrant groups in the United States during the first half the twentieth century. In the
first two decades of the twentieth century, Italians, Poles, Greeks, Eastern European Jews, and other new immigrant groups were considered unassimilatable populations that crowded into poor and often dangerous neighborhoods. Scholarly books, popular magazines, and Senate committees speculated about the inferior “races” of southern and eastern Europe and urged barriers to further immigration before the country was led to ruin.

The children and grandchildren of these immigrant groups, however, experienced rapid social and economic mobility (Lieberson 1980, Alba and Nee 2003). In the decades after World War II, the educational and occupational attainment of the descendants of the early 20th century immigrants reached parity or exceeded those of long resident Americans. A parallel development was the increase in rates of intermarriage. In the early decades of the 20th century, ethnic intermarriage (among European immigrant groups) was rare, but in the decades after World War II, it was commonplace. According to recent censuses and surveys, the majority of Americans claim multiple ethnic ancestries. It is unusual to find white Americans who have all four grandparents of the same ancestry.

Although the assimilation of the children and grandchildren are established historical facts, there is considerable debate on the fate of current immigrant groups, most of whom are fairly recent arrivals from Asia and Latin America. Since the majority of the new immigrants are non-whites, some researchers have suggested that the children of new immigrants will find it harder to “blend in” than did the children of European immigrants. With the legacy of pervasive “racial” discrimination against African Americans, Latinos, and other minority groups in housing and employment, the fears about the limited opportunities for social mobility among the new immigrant groups are not without merit. Although the jury is still out (the second generation of the new immigrant groups is still quite young) there are some signs that the experiences of upward mobility of the new immigrant groups will be closer to those of earlier white immigrants than racial minorities (Alba and Nee 2003).
The educational records (grades, high school enrollment, proportions attending college) of the second generation immigrants are comparable to white Americans, though there are some populations that are lagging behind, especially Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans (who are not immigrants) and Dominicans.

HOW DOES IMMIGRATION AFFECT DESTINATION COMMUNITIES?
Several years ago, the National Research Council published a major report on the demographic, economic, and social impact of immigration on American society (Smith and Edmonston 1997). The report was an effort to summarize the current state of knowledge without regard to the ongoing political and policy debates.

The economic analysis had two parts—the effects of immigration on the overall economy and labor market and secondly, the impact of immigration on government expenditures. On the first issue, the report concluded that immigration expanded the overall economy and increased incomes, though there may be some adverse consequences for low income workers. Economic theory predicts that the addition of low-wage workers (immigrants) to a labor market will increase wage competition for those at the bottom of skill hierarchy. The presumed effects should be lower wages and job displacement of native-born workers.

However, most of the empirical research for the last few decades has found that the average incomes of workers in cities with many immigrants are equal to or higher than wages of workers in cities with fewer immigrants. Even more complex statistical models which attempt to examine the labor market competition hypothesis find little or no evidence for hypothesized effect of labor market competition (Carter and Sutch 1998, Friedberg and Hunt 1999). These results are inconsistent with economic theory and also with case studies that have found displacement of native born workers in certain sectors with high levels of immigration.

These inconsistent findings might be reconciled if we consider that immigration “creates” jobs for native-born workers as well as displacing some native-born workers. Immigrants
add to economic demand as consumers for food, housing, transportation and other goods and services produced by native-born workers. Immigration also simulates the growth of industries that are based on immigrant labor that would not otherwise be available (agriculture, construction, restaurants, personal services, high tech firms). The presence of immigrants may also “push up” native born workers to supervisory positions in the labor market. It is interesting to note that there were no measurable effects on unemployment and the wages of native born workers in Miami following the Muriel Bay exodus, which added more than 100,000 persons to the Miami area (Card 1990). Even though it is difficult to find conclusive labor market effects of immigration in high immigration cities, there may have been a national effect on the relative wages of low skill workers (high school dropouts) through secondary migration. There is continuing research on this topic, and the final answers are not yet in.

The presence of large numbers of immigrants in certain high immigration states has added to the fiscal pressures on local and state governments. One of the major expenditures of state and local governments is public education, and immigrants, in general, have larger families than do native-born workers. The contribution of immigrants to local taxes (sales taxes, property taxes, state income taxes) is somewhat lower (per capita) than native born workers because immigrants have lower incomes and own less expensive properties. The net consequence is a net transfer from native born families to immigrant families through the public sector at the state and local level in high immigration states (e.g., New Jersey, California).

However, these cross sectional results underestimate the long term transfer of income of immigrants and their descendents to the public sector. The children of immigrants grow up and pay taxes, which tend to go up with higher incomes. The children of immigrants (the second generation) do not have larger families than the American average. Therefore, intergenerational accounting shows future increases in public revenues from the investment made to offer public schooling to the children of immigrants.
The additional consideration for the accounting of the impact of immigrants on public taxes and expenditures is the role of the federal government. Immigrants pay income and payroll taxes (social security), which helps to relieve the per-capita burden on native born taxpayers because of the fixed costs of many federal programs (military, highways) and their disproportionate skew to the population at older ages (social security, Medicare). Because the immigrant population is much younger than the native-born population, there are fewer (proportionately) immigrants eligible for social security and Medicare. Moreover, a significant share of immigrants leaves the United States before their retirement (especially those who are here illegally) and do not collect social security and Medicare. Intergenerational accounting that integrates local, state, and federal public expenditures concludes that immigrants make a net positive contribution to public finance in the United States (Smith and Edmonston 1997).

THE IMPACT OF EMIGRATION ON SENDING SOCIETIES

The brain drain portrait of emigration does have some empirical support. Although the majority of immigrants are not doctors, engineers, and high technology workers, some are. It is possible that if these migrants remained in their country of origin, they would have made important contributions to national development. However, the motivation to emigrate probably indicates some degree of dissatisfaction with employment prospects or other conditions in their home countries. The assumption of opportunities to fully use their skills at home may not be true for all (or many) emigrants.

The other key point is that emigrants do not cut all their ties to their homelands when they move. In fact, many of them return home within a few years. The standard model along the Mexican U.S. border is one of temporary migration of young Mexicans to the U.S. labor market for few months or a few years (Massey et al. 2003). After saving enough money to purchase land or to launch a career, most Mexican immigrants return home.

Even among those who have planned to immigrate permanently, there is always a return flow to the home country. Perhaps one quarter to one third of European immigrants in the
early decades of the 20th century returned home, and the rates are probably similar for the contemporary wave of immigrants. There are frequent news accounts of very successful immigrants to the United States being lured back home to Taiwan, Korea and China with offers and bonuses from businesses, universities, and governments.

In addition to the human capital created by return migration, the other major contribution of emigrants to their home countries is through remittances. Many immigrants scrimp by, and save a very high fraction of their earnings. These earnings are repatriated to the migrant’s family in the home country via periodic trips home or are transmitted through financial institutions or informal immigrant networks. In the late 1980s, the volume of remittances sent by emigrants abroad to their families at home was conservatively estimated to be between 2 and 3 billion dollars annually (Massey et al. 1998: 230). These estimates are based primarily from official banking sources, so they are underestimates of funds transmitted through family and friends.

For many developing countries with workers abroad, remittances range from one to ten percent of GDP and are the largest single source of funds from outside the country. In many cases, remittances exceed the value of foreign aid and direct foreign investment. Developing countries are often advised to develop manufacturing and other export industries to improve their international balance of payments. However, it seems that exporting workers who send remittances home may be one of the most important means garnering revenues in the international marketplace.

With a growing awareness of the economic contributions of international migrants, many developing countries have begun to praise and reward their citizens who work aboard. Returning foreign workers are often greeted by political leaders when they come home for national holidays and are courted and honored as benefactors. Several countries have encouraged their citizens abroad to vote in home country elections and to stay involved politically and economically.
A major critique of the heavy reliance on remittances is that most of the funds are used primarily for consumption rather than investment. Migrant families at home do use remittances for food, shelter, and other essentials of life. But remittances are also used to purchase land, start businesses, and to support the schooling of family members. For most families, remittances are the only source of disposable income for consumption or investment.

CONCLUSIONS
There is a dark side to international migration—the flight of refugees from natural and man-made catastrophes. Floods, earthquakes, fires, and volcanic eruptions often strike with no warning, and in the aftermath people flee by foot or by any means of conveyance. Wars, revolutions, and violent persecutions of religious and ethnic groups also create mass movements of peoples far from their homes. These events are usually short-lived with refugees returning home after the dangers recede. But not always. The refugee camps in the Middle East and South Asia have lasted decades (and even for generations). The history of forced migrations in the former Soviet Union and in other societies is only slowly being understood and documented (Polian 2004).

Flights from oppression have been an important source of immigration to the United States. Quakers and other dissenting sects sought religious tolerance that did not exist in eighteenth century England, and the violent pogroms against Jews in Russia in the late nineteenth century was the primary cause of Eastern European Jewish immigration to the United States. German refugees from the failed 1848 revolutions and Cubans refugees from communist Cuba in the 1960s were also able to find refuge in the United States.

The numbers of refugees are large, both historically and at present, often numbering in the millions. Any theory and public policy that engages migration must include the flight of refugees as a central issue. In this brief essay, however, I have focused on “normal” long distance migration, which comprises the majority of the 175 international migrants. By the word “normal,” I do not mean that long distance (or international) migration is not occasioned by economic depravation. Almost all migration requires strong push factors,
of which economic forces are paramount. By normal, I simply mean that migration is a recurrent pattern in human history caused by the spatial mismatch of people and opportunities and that pull factors are as important as push factors.

Since the negative consequences of international migration are commonly featured in the news media and political discussions, my aim here has been to point to some of the historical and contemporary evidence on the positive outcomes for migrants, destination societies, even for sending societies. In a fuller exposition, I would have reviewed the literature on the problems experienced by new immigrants, the frequent backlash against immigrants in host societies, and losses of communities that are hollowed out by emigration. In this instance, however, I thought that it would be more valuable to point to conclusions that may be less well known. For example, most immigrants, or at least their children, do experience considerable socioeconomic mobility. There is some evidence that immigration provides economic benefits to the host community, including generating more tax revenues in the long run. And international migrants through their remittances are helping their relatives back home to improve their economic status.

What about migration and national security? If national security simply means the avoidance of any additional sources of risk, the answer is clear—simply make it more difficult for foreigners to enter the United States and reduce the number of available immigrant visas. This policy has actually been tried before, when there were fears about foreigners and their harmful effects on American society. In the 1920s, the United States essentially closed to the door to immigration to everywhere except Northwestern Europe and the Western Hemisphere. This policy, known as the “National Origins Quota” system was reaffirmed in the 1952 McCarran Walter Immigration Act and was the law of the land until 1965, when more liberal reforms were enacted.

There are, however, costs to a more restrictive visa and immigration policy. First, many domestic constituencies will object. At present, about one fifth of the American population (almost 60 million persons) are first and second generation immigrants (the foreign born and their children). This community (many of whom are voting citizens) is
unlikely to favor policies that will deny opportunities for their family members to come to the United States. There are also many sectors of the economy that are heavily dependent on immigrant labor. High tech companies, hospitals, meatpacking, agriculture, and many other industries cannot find sufficient native born American workers with the necessary skills or motivation for jobs in their industries. Without foreign graduate students, most leading university departments of engineering and natural sciences would be short staffed. Many American households have also become dependent on affordable childcare, gardening, and housecleaning services supplied by immigrant workers. It is not too surprising that every Congressional effort at immigration reform over the last three decades begins with some notion of restricting immigration, but eventually creates additional mechanisms for entry.

Beyond domestic interests, there are important international considerations that are affected by American visa and immigration policies. As expressed by President Truman (see quotation on page 7) in his veto of the 1952 McCarran Walter Act, it is very difficult for the American government to exercise moral leadership abroad if domestic policies are considered to be discriminatory. Just as the National Origins Quota immigration policy and Jim Crow race relations were stains on the international image of the United States, the more generous immigration laws and the national response to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s provided authentic moral authority to a cynical world where most governmental actions are governed by realpolitik. Moral pronouncements are ubiquitous in the international world, but transparent efforts to live up to ideals are very unusual.

My argument is not that there is a one to one correlation between immigration policy and international prestige and influence, but rather that the more open immigration policies of the United States since 1965 (which is consistent with national identity as a “nation of immigrants”) has had an important positive influence and been an important national resource in the world market place of ideas. This influence has been reinforced with the relative openness of American colleges and universities to students from abroad. Most foreign students are deeply impressed with the warmth of the welcome from host families, fellow students, teachers, and American society in general. These students
return home and often become life long admirers of American society and its ideals, which are more than rhetoric.

In the coming months and years, there will be continued policy debates over how open American society can be. The arguments over the risk of immigrants, international students, and visitors are relatively well known and understood. The long term benefits and advantages of a relatively open immigration policy and visa program are equally worthy of consideration.

Bibliography


