



[[Home](#)] [[Why VDARE?](#)] [[VDARE People Pages](#)] [[VDARE Links](#)] [[Search](#)] [[Archive](#)] [[Letters](#)]
[[Email VDARE Writers](#)] [[Email For Publication](#)] [[Email Not For Publication](#)]
[[Make Tax-Deductible Credit-Card Contribution](#)] [[Center For American Unity](#)]

[Peter Brimelow Archive](#)

 [Email a Friend...](#)

 [Printer Friendly Version...](#)

Time to Rethink Immigration?

by Peter Brimelow
from National Review, June 22, 1992

Mr. Brimelow is Editor at [VDARE.com](#).



DANTE would have been delighted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service waiting rooms. They would have provided him with a tenth Circle of Hell. There is something distinctly infernal about the spectacle of so many lost souls waiting around so hopelessly, mutually incomprehensible in virtually every language under the sun, each clutching a number from one of those ticket-issuing machines which may or may not be honored by the INS clerks before the end of the Civil Service working day.

The danger of damnation is perhaps low--although a Scottish friend of mine once found himself flung into the deportation holding tank because the INS misunderstood its own rules. And toward the end of my own ten-year trek through the system, I whiled away a lot of time watching confrontations between suspicious INSers and agitated Iranians, apparently hauled in because the Iran hostage crisis had inspired the Carter Administration to ask how many of them were enrolled in U.S. universities. (The INS was unable to provide an answer during the 444 days of the hostage crisis-or, as it turned out, at all.)

Nevertheless, you can still get a pretty good blast of brimstone if you dare suggest that it might be another of those misunderstandings when, having finally reached the head of the line, you are ordered by the clerk to go away and come back another day with a previously unmentioned Form XYZ.

Your fellow huddled masses accept this treatment with a horrible passivity. Perhaps it is imbued in them by eons of arbitrary government in their native lands. Only rarely is there a flurry of protest. At its center, almost invariably, is an indignant American spouse.

Just as New York City's government can't stop muggers but does a great job ticketing young women on Park Avenue for failing to scoop up after their lapdogs, current U.S. immigration policy in effect enforces the law only against those who obey it. Annual legal immigration of some 950,000-counting the 140,000 refugees and the 100,000 granted political asylum-is overwhelmed by the 2 to 3 million illegal entries into the country every year, which result in a net annual increase of perhaps 250,000 illegal aliens. (A cautious estimate-again, no one really knows.)

The INS bureaucracy still grinds through its rituals. But meanwhile the U.S. has lost control of its borders. As it turned out, I could have avoided my INS decade by the simple expedient of staying here after I graduated from Stanford in 1972 and waiting to be amnestied, along with some 3.2 million other illegal immigrants, by the 1986 Immigration Act.

There is another parallel with New York: Just as when you leave Park Avenue and descend into the subway, on entering the INS waiting rooms you find yourself in an underworld that is almost entirely colored. In 1990, for example, only 8 per cent of 1.5 million legal immigrants, including amnestied illegals, came from Europe. (And a good few of those were on-migrants from Asia or the Caribbean.)

Only the incurious could fail to wonder: Where do all these people get off and come to the surface? That is: What impact will they have on America?

Where Will They Surface?

AMERICAN LIBERALS, of course, are determinedly, even devoutly, incurious about this subject. You quickly learn not to raise such matters with them at all.

The silence of American conservatives has a more complex cause. To a significant degree, it's due to sheer ignorance. In the early 1970s, a battle-scarred Goldwater veteran brushed aside my news from the INS waiting rooms. The U.S., he said, was far too big for immigration to have any but the most marginal effect. When later I showed him a news report that the inflow from the former British West Indies had quintupled during the previous decade, he was astonished. (These numbers add up. By 1973, over 220,000 West Indians lived in the New York area alone. And it was just the beginning. The number of Jamaicans immigrating to the U.S. between 1951 and 1980 amounted to more than a tenth of the island's population. By 1990, almost another tenth of Jamaica had arrived in the U.S., the highest proportion from any country in the world.)

Very few people can absorb new realities after the age of 21. And conservative leaders now in their fifties spent their formative years in one of the greatest lulls in the history of American immigration--the result of restrictive quota legislation designed to favor Northern Europeans in the 1920s, followed by the Depression and World War II. Amazingly, only about 500,000 legal immigrants entered the U.S. in the whole of the 1930s. (In those days, there was virtually no illegal immigration.) And only about a million entered in the 1940s "including World War II refugees. By contrast, of course, the U.S. accepted over 1.5 million immigrants, counting only legals, in the single year of 1990 alone.

The Great Immigration Lull was ended dramatically by the 1965 Immigration Act. Typical of so many Great Society reforms, it was passed amid much moralizing rhetoric and promptly had exactly the opposite of its advertised effect.

U.S. immigration policy was not transformed without debate. There was a debate. It just bore no relationship to what subsequently happened. In particular, staunch defenders of the national-origins quota system, like the American Legion, allowed themselves to be persuaded that the new legislation really enacted a sort of worldwide quota, no longer skewed toward Northern Europe--a policy easily caricatured as "racist" in the era of the civil-rights movement--but still restricting overall immigration to the then-current level of around 300,000. (A detailed account of Congress's deluded intent and the dramatic consequences appears in Lawrence Auster's devastating *The Path to National Suicide: An Essay on Immigration and Multiculturalism*, published by AICF*.)

Today, it is astonishing to read the categorical assurances given by supporters of the 1965 Immigration Act. "What the bill will not do," summarized Immigration Subcommittee chairman Senator Edward Kennedy: First, our cities will not be flooded with a million immigrants annually. Under the proposed bill, the present level of immigration remains substantially the same ... Secondly, the ethnic mix will not be upset . . . Contrary to the charges in some quarters, [the bill] will not inundate America with immigrants from any one country or area, or the most populated and deprived nations of Africa and Asia . . .

Every one of these assurances has proved false. Immigration levels did surge upward--they are now running at a million a year. Immigrants do come predominantly from one sort of area--85 per cent of the 11.8 million legal immigrants arriving in the U.S. between 1971 and 1990 were from the Third World, 44 per cent from Latin America and the Caribbean, 36 per cent from Asia--and from one country: 20 per cent from Mexico. And about 33,000 Africans arrived in 1990, which looks small only by comparison.

Above all, the American ethnic mix has been upset. In 1960, the U.S. population was 88.6 per cent white; in 1990, it was only 75.6 per cent white--a drop of 13 percentage points in thirty years. (Indeed, the proportion of "European-Americans" is probably a couple of percentage points lower than that, because the Census Bureau counts all Middle Easterners as "white.") The demographer Leon Bouvier has projected that by 2020--that is, easily within the lifetimes of many NATIONAL REVIEW readers--the proportion of whites could fall as low as 61 per cent. Among children under 15, minorities could be approaching the point of becoming the majority.

These projections put into context the common claim that--as Professor Julian Simon put it in *The Economic Consequences of Immigration* (1990), a book that has been widely accepted by conservatives as their bible on the subject--"contemporary immigration is not high by U.S. historical standards." In fact, immigration is high, in terms of absolute numbers, by comparison with all but the peak decade of 1901-10, when about 8.7 million immigrants arrived, part of the great wave from Southern Europe. And counting illegals, the 1981-90 decade probably matched and may have exceeded that total. Furthermore, this latest wave shows no sign of receding. Nor, given the Third World's demographic structure, is there any particular reason to suppose it will.

Of course, immigration is lower in relative terms than in the first decade of the twentieth century--the total U.S. population at that time was less than a third of today's. However, this was not a proportion that could extend indefinitely. Immigration has never been relatively higher than when the second Pilgrim Father came down the gangplank, increasing the Plymouth Colony's population by 100 per cent. As it is, the U.S. takes half of all the emigrants in the world.

But it also is crucial to note a point always omitted in pro-immigration polemics: in 1900, the U.S. birthrate was much higher than today. American Anglos' birthrates, for example, are now below replacement levels. So immigrants have proportionately more demographic impact. By the early 1980s, immigration was running at the equivalent of about 16 per cent of native births-including births to immigrants--and rising. This is eminently comparable to the 19.9 per cent of 1901-10. Hence the steadily shifting ethnic balance.

"The government should dissolve the people and elect another one," quipped the Communist playwright Bertolt Brecht after the East German riots of 1953. For good or ill, the U.S. political elite seems to be acting on his advice.

Immigration Sleight of Hand

PERHAPS BECAUSE the 1965 Immigration Act was slipped through in such a deceptive way, many Americans, and many conservatives, just do not realize that it is directly responsible for this transformation of their country. They tend to assume that a kind of natural phenomenon is at work--that Hispanics, for example, increased from 4.5 per cent of the U.S. population in 1970 to 9 per cent in 1990 because they somehow started sprouting out of the earth like spring corn.

But no natural process is at work. The current wave of immigration, and America's shifting ethnic balance, is simply the result of public policy. A change in public policy opened the Third World floodgates after 1965. A further change in public policy could shut them. Public policy could even restore the status quo ante 1965, which would slowly shift the ethnic balance back.

It's often said that Europeans no longer want to emigrate. But in fact the 1965 Act cut back a continuing flow: the number of British immigrants, for example, had been running at around 28,000 a year and was immediately reduced by about half. Along with other Europeans, the British seem simply to have been diverted to the countries that compete with the U.S. for skilled immigrants: above all Australia and Canada.

And all such dogmatic assertions about immigration are dangerous. Witness the sudden influx of more than 100,000 illegal Irish immigrants in the late 1980s--and the wholly unexpected unfreezing of a sea of potential immigrants from Eastern Europe in the early 1990s.

Since 1965, moreover, U.S. public policy has in effect actively discriminated against Europeans. This is because, in another reversal, the 1965 Act placed a higher priority on "family reunification" than on admitting immigrants with skills. And "reunification" meant relatives no matter how remote. So the new immigrants arriving from countries that had not been traditional sources were able to sponsor so many additional immigrants that they crowded out European applicants with skills but no family connections from the "overall quota"---before spilling over into the special category of admissions outside the "overall quota," which turned out to be vastly larger than predicted.

As a result, the post-1965 immigration is not only much bigger than expected: it is also less skilled. And it is becoming even less so--one economist, Professor George J. Borjas, himself a Cuban immigrant, has gone so far as to say, in his 1990 *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy*, that "the skill level of successive immigrant waves admitted to the U.S. has declined precipitously in the past two or three decades." For example, in 1986 less than 4 per cent of the over

600,000 legal immigrants were admitted on the basis of skills.

Paradoxically, Borjas says, the U.S. attracts disproportionate numbers of unskilled people from Third World countries because the income distribution there is so unequal. The poor have the most to gain. Conversely, it is skilled workers who have the most to gain by leaving egalitarian Western Europe--if they could get in here.

Some more skilled immigrants will be coming to America as a result of legislation in 1990, which--initially as a result of pressure from Irish groups--increased the skill quota by rather less than 100,000. But the price of this, extracted by other, post-1965 ethnic lobbies, was a substantial overall increase in family reunification immigration.

Come, All Ye Huddled Masses

JUST AS conservatives tend to think immigration is a natural phenomenon, they also assume vaguely that it must have been ratified by some free-market process. But immigration to the U.S. is not determined by economics: it is determined--or at least profoundly distorted--by public policy. Inevitably, there are mismatches between skills supplied and skills demanded. Which helps explain why--as Borjas demonstrated in *Friends or Strangers*--welfare participation and poverty rates are sharply higher among the post-1965 immigrants, with some groups, such as Dominicans and other Hispanics, approaching the levels of American-born blacks.

Borjas's findings, although well understood among specialists, will be surprising to many conservatives. They contrast sharply with some of Julian Simon's more familiar conclusions. The basic reason: Simon's data were old, reflecting earlier, more traditional immigrant groups--another danger in this rapidly changing area.

Such is the grip of the American elite's pro-immigration consensus, however, that book reviewers simply assumed Borjas must be pro-immigration too. They failed to pick up what he described as his "worrisome" evidence that problems were developing with the post-1965 immigrant flow. Thus *Business Week*'s Michael J. Mandel reviewed both Borjas's and Simon's books under the drum-beating heading "DOES AMERICA NEED MORE 'HUDDLED MASSES'? YES." Possibly provoked by such total misreadings, Borjas the following year spelled out his position in the preface to his paperback edition: it is almost certain that during the 1990s new immigrants will make up at least a third of all new labor market entrants. In view of the available empirical evidence, there is no economic rationale to justify this huge increase in the size of the foreign-born population. (*Italics added!*)

On close examination, at least some pro-immigration enthusiasts turn out to be perfectly well aware that current policy is deeply flawed. Ben J. Wattenberg has popularized the idea that the U.S. can become "The First Universal Nation," as his 1991 book is titled, drawing its population from every corner of the globe. This romantic vision has entranced quite a few conservatives. But they don't seem to have noticed that in that book, Wattenberg actually calls for "designer immigration"--radically reoriented toward skills rather than family reunification, keeping out illegals and ending what he describes as the "odd situation" whereby Europeans are effectively discriminated against. Of course, he hastens to add, this will not cut back on Third World immigrants as such. (Wattenberg tells me that the 1990 Act was merely "a good solid half-step forward" and that he "still advocates designer immigration.")

'A Nation of Immigrants'

EVERYONE HAS seen a speeded-up film of the cloudscape. What appears to the naked eye to be a panorama of almost immobile grandeur writhes into wild life. Vast patterns of soaring, swooping movement are suddenly discernible. Great towering cumulo-nimbus formations boil up out of nowhere, dominating the sky in a way that would be terrifying if it were not, in real life, so gradual that we are barely aware that anything is going on. This is a perfect metaphor for the development of the American nation. America, of course, is exceptional. What is exceptional about it, however, is not the way in which it was created, but the speed.

"We are a nation of immigrants." No discussion of U.S. immigration policy gets far without someone making this helpful remark. As an immigrant myself, I always pause respectfully. You never know. Maybe this is what they're taught to chant in schools nowadays, a sort of multicultural Pledge of Allegiance.

But it secretly amuses me. Do they really think other nations sprouted up out of the ground? ("Autechthonous" is the classical Greek word.) The truth is that all nations are nations of immigrants. But the process is usually so slow and historic that people overlook it. They mistake for mountains what are merely clouds.

This is obvious in the case of the British Isles, from which the largest single proportion of Americans are still derived. You can see it in the place-names. Within a few miles of my parents' home in the north of England, the names are Roman (Chester, derived from the Latin for camp), Saxon (anything ending in -ton, town, like Oxten), Viking (-by, farm, like Irby), and Norman French (Delamere). At times, these successive waves of peoples were clearly living cheek by jowl. Thus among these place-names is Wallesey, Anglo-Saxon for "Island of the Welsh"--Welsh being derived from the word used by low-German speakers for foreigners wherever they met them, from Wallonia to Wallachia. This corner of the English coast continued as home to some of the pre-Roman Celtic stock, not all of whom were driven west into Wales proper as was once supposed.

The English language that America speaks today (or at least spoke until the post-1965 fashion for bilingual education) reflects the fact that the peoples of Britain merged, eventually; their separate contributions can still be traced in it. Every nation in Europe went through the same process. Even the famously homogeneous Japanese show the signs of ethnically distinct waves of prehistoric immigration.

But merging takes time. After the Norman Conquest in 1066, it was nearly three hundred years before the invaders were assimilated to the point where court proceedings in London were again heard in English. And it was nearly nine centuries before there was any further large-scale immigration into the British Isles--the Caribbean and Asian influx after World War II.

Except in America. Here the process of merging has been uniquely rapid. Thus about 7 million Germans have immigrated to the U.S. since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Their influence has been profound--to my British eye it accounts for the odd American habit of getting up in the morning and starting work. About 50 million Americans told the 1980 Census that they were wholly or partly of German descent. But only 1.6 million spoke German in their homes.

What Is a Nation?

SO ALL NATIONS are made up of immigrants. But what is a nation--the end-product of all this merging? This brings us into a territory where words are weapons, exactly as George Orwell pointed out years ago. "Nation"--as suggested by its Latin root *nascere*, to be born intrinsically implies a link by blood. A nation is an extended family. The merging process through which all nations pass is not merely cultural, but to a considerable extent biological, through intermarriage.

Liberal commentators, for various reasons, find this deeply distressing. They regularly denounce appeals to common ethnicity as "nativism" or "tribalism." Ironically, when I studied African history in college, my politically correct tutor deprecated any reference to "tribes." These small, primitive, and incoherent groupings should, he said, be dignified as "nations." Which suggests a useful definition: tribalism/nativism is nationalism of which liberals disapprove.

American political debate on this point is hampered by a peculiar difficulty. American editors are convinced that the term "state" will confuse readers unless reserved exclusively for the component parts of the United States--New York, California, etc. So when talking about sovereign political structures, where the British would use "state," the Germans "Staat," and the French "l'etat," journalists here are compelled to use the word "nation." Thus in the late 1980s it was common to see references to "the nation of Yugoslavia," when Yugoslavia's problem was precisely that it was not a nation at all, but a state that contained several different small but fierce nations--Croats, Serbs etc. (In my constructive way, I've been trying to introduce, as an alternative to "state," the word "polity"--defined by Webster as "a politically organized unit." But it's quite hopeless. Editors always confuse it with "policy.")

This defrational difficulty explains one of the regular entertainments of U.S. politics: uproar because someone has unguardedly described America as a "Christian nation." Of course, in the sense that the vast majority of Americans are Christians, this is nothing less than the plain truth. It is not in the least incompatible with a secular state (polity).

But the difficulty over the N-word has a more serious consequence: it means that American commentators are losing sight of the concept of the "nation-state"--a sovereign structure that is the political expression of a specific ethno-cultural group. Yet the nation-state was one of the crucial inventions of the modern age. Mass literacy, education, and mobility put a premium on the unifying effect of cultural and ethnic homogeneity. None of the great pre-modern multinational empires have survived. (The Brussels bureaucracy may be trying to create another, but it has a long way to go.)

This is why Ben Wattenberg is able to get away with talking about a "Universal Nation." On its face, this is a contradiction in terms. It's possible, as Wattenberg variously implies, that he means the diverse immigrant groups will eventually intermarry, producing what he calls, quoting the English poet John Masefield, a "wondrous race." Or that they will at least be assimilated by American culture, which, while globally dominant, is hardly "universal." But meanwhile there are hard questions. What language is this "universal nation" going to speak? How is it going to avoid ethnic strife? dual loyalties? collapsing like the Tower of Babel? Wattenberg is not asked to reconcile these questions, although he is not unaware of them, because in American political discourse the ideal of an American nation-state is in eclipse.

Ironically, the same weaknesses were apparent in the rather similar concept of "cultural pluralism" invented by Horace M. Kallen at the height of the last great

immigration debate, before the Quota Acts of the 1920s. Kallen, like many of today's pro-immigration enthusiasts, reacted emotionally against the calls for "Americanization" that the 1880-to-1920 immigrant wave provoked. He argued that any unitary American nationality had already been dissipated by immigration (sound familiar?). Instead, he said, the U.S. had become merely a political state (polity) containing a number of different nationalities.

Kallen left the practical implications of this vision "woefully undeveloped" (in the words of the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups). It eventually evolved into a vague approval of tolerance, which was basically how Americans had always treated immigrant groups anyway--an extension, not coincidentally, of how the English built the British nation.

But in one respect, Kallenism is very much alive: he argued that authentic Americanism was what he called "the American Idea." This amounted to an almost religious idealization of "democracy," which again was left undeveloped but which appeared to have as much to do with non-discrimination and equal protection under the law as with elections. Today, a messianic concern for global "democracy" is being suggested to conservatives as an appropriate objective for U.S. foreign policy.

And Kallenism underlies the second helpful remark that someone always makes in any discussion of U.S. immigration policy: "America isn't a nation like the other nations-it's an idea."

Once more, this American exceptionalism is really more a matter of degree than of kind. Many other nations have some sort of ideational reinforcement. Quite often it is religious, such as Poland's Roman Catholicism; sometimes cultural, such as France's ineffable Frenchness. And occasionally it is political. Thus-- again not coincidentally--the English used to talk about what might be described as the "English Idea": English liberties, their rights as Englishmen, and so on. Americans used to know immediately what this meant. As Jesse Chickering wrote in 1848 of his diverse fellow Americans: "English laws and institutions, adapted to the circumstances of the country, have been adopted here . . . The tendency of things is to mold the whole into one people, whose leading characteristics are English, formed on American soil."

What is unusual in the present debate, however, is that Americans are now being urged to abandon the bonds of a common ethnicity and instead to trust entirely to ideology to hold together their state (polity). This is an extraordinary experiment, like suddenly replacing all the blood in a patient's body. History suggests little reason to suppose it will succeed. Christendom and Islam have long ago been sundered by national quarrels. More recently, the much-touted "Soviet Man," the creation of much tougher ideologists using much rougher methods than anything yet seen in the U.S., has turned out to be a Russian, Ukrainian, or Kazakh after all.

Which is why Shakespeare has King Henry V say, before the battle of Agincourt, not "we defenders of international law and the dynastic principle as it applies to my right to inherit the throne of France," but

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. However, although intellectuals may have decided that America is not a nation but an idea, the news has not reached the American people--especially that significant minority who sternly tell the Census Bureau their ethnicity is "American." (They seem mostly to be of British origin, many generations back.) And it would have been considered absurd throughout most of American history.

John Jay in The Federalist Papers wrote that Americans were "one united people, a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs." Some hundred years later, Theodore Roosevelt in his Winning of the West traced the "perfectly continuous history" of the Anglo-Saxons from King Alfred to George Washington. He presented the settling of the lands beyond the Alleghenies as "the crowning and greatest achievement" of "the spread of the English-speaking peoples," which--though personally a liberal on racial matters--he saw in explicit terms: "it is of incalculable importance that America, Australia, and Siberia should pass out of the hands of their red, black, and yellow aboriginal owners, and become the heritage of the dominant world races."

Roosevelt himself was an example of ethnicities merging to produce this new nation. He thanked God-- he teased his friend Rudyard Kipling--that there was "not a drop of British blood" in him. But that did not stop him from identifying with Anglo-Saxons or from becoming a passionate advocate of an assimilationist Americanism, which crossed ethnic lines and was ultimately to cross racial lines.

And it is important to note that, at the height of the last great immigration wave, Kallen and his allies totally failed to persuade Americans that they were no longer a nation. Quite the contrary: once convinced that their nationhood was threatened by continued massive immigration, Americans changed the public policies that made it possible. While the national-origins quotas were being legislated, President Calvin Coolidge put it unflinchingly: "America must be kept American."

Everyone knew what he meant.

'Pulling Up the Ladder'

ANOTHER of those helpful lines exactly describes what Americans did in the 1920s: "Pulling up the ladder." But pulling up the ladder may be necessary--if the lifeboat is about to capsize.

And the American lifeboat undeniably did stabilize after the 1920s. It took time. As late as 1963, when Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan published Beyond the Melting Pot, the ethnic groups that had arrived in the 1880-to-1920 wave appeared not to be assimilating into the American mainstream. At best, as Will Herberg argued in Protestant, Catholic, Jew, there was a "triple melting pot" working within the major religious communities--for example, Irish Catholics marrying Italian Catholics; German Jews marrying Russian Jews.

But then, just when the media-academic complex had tooled up an entire industry based on the "unmeltable ethnics," they started to melt. The figures are dramatic. According to Robert C. Christopher in his 1989 Crashing the Gates: The De-Wasping of America's Power Elite, half of all Italian-Americans born since World War II married non-Catholics, mainly Protestants; some 40 per cent of Jews marrying in the 1980s chose Gentile spouses, a phenomenon rare if not unknown only twenty years earlier.

Christopher, a former Newsweek writer and political liberal, naturally saw this development as an emerging cultural synthesis free (at last!) of any nasty ethnic connotations at all. But there is a simpler interpretation: the American nation was just swallowing, and then digesting--Wasping, to adapt Christopheis terminology -- an unusually large and spicy immigrant meal.

This pattern of swallowing and digesting has recurred throughout American history. Waves of immigration have been followed by lulls right back into colonial times. After the turmoil of the Revolutionary War, there was a Great Lull remarkably similar to the one earlier this century. For nearly fifty years, there was practically no immigration at all. The U.S. grew rapidly through natural increase. But the make-up of the white population remained about what it had been in the 1790 Census: largely (60 per cent) English, heavily (80 per cent) British, and overwhelmingly (98 per cent) Protestant. This was the nation Alexis de Tocqueville described in *Democracy in America* (1835) --an irony, since his name has now been adopted by Gregory Fossedal's pro-immigration lobby. That Tocqueville's analysis still has relevance is a tribute to that nation's powers of assimilation and cultural transmission.

Thereafter, immigration relative to U.S. population peaked about every fifteen or twenty years: in 1851-54, 1866-73, 1881-83, 1905-07, and 1921-24. In between it plunged, by as much as three-quarters or more. And the ethnic composition continuously changed. Earlier in the century, the largest element was Irish; in the middle, German; by the end, from Southern and Eastern Europe. After 1924, immigration was reduced to a trickle but that trickle was from Northern and Western Europe. These variations in the magnitude and make-up of immigration were vital to the process of digestion.

And this pattern of variation puts a different perspective on the immigration debate. For example, it is conventional to dismiss all concerns about immigration with the argument that such fears have proved groundless in the past. Of course, this is illogical. Just because a danger has been averted in the past does not mean it cannot happen in the future. Many passengers might have climbed aboard the lifeboat safely; one more may still capsize it.

But in fact these concerns, which have been expressed by the most eminent Americans going right back to colonial times, were perfectly reasonable. They were rendered moot only by changing circumstances. Thus Benjamin Franklin worried about German immigration in 1751: "Why should Pennsylvania, rounded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them... ?" Franklin was not proved wrong: instead, German immigration was halted--in the short run, by the Seven Years' War (1756-63); in the longer run, by the post-Revolution Great Lull.

Similarly, the nativist anti-Catholic "Know-Nothing" insurrection, which had seized six state governments and elected 75 congressmen by 1855, was the reaction, harsh but human, of a Protestant nation that had forgotten immigration to its apparently imminent inundation by Irish Catholics fleeing the 1846 potato famine. Subsequently, Know-Nothingism receded, partly because of the Civil War, but also because the supply of Irish Catholics turned out to be finite after all. The Irish made up nearly half of the 1851-54 wave. They were perhaps a fifth or less of the subsequent trough.

The public policies that excluded Asian immigration for nearly a hundred years also appear rather different in this historical perspective. The California Legislature's 1876 report on immigration complained that the Chinese "have never adapted themselves to our habits, mode of dress, or our educational system... Impregnable to all the influences of our Anglo-Saxon life, they remain the same stolid Asiatics that have floated on the rivers and slaved in the fields of China for thirty centuries of time." Whatever its dark motive, this is on its face a very specific complaint about the difficulty of assimilating immigrants from a pre-modern society. In the interim,

the Orient has modernized. Today, immigrants from the area are often viewed (perhaps naively) as the most, well, "Anglo-Saxon," of the current wave.

Ask a Stupid Question...

HISTORICAL perspective also discredits another conventional ploy in the immigration debate: "How can X be against immigration when the nativists wanted to keep his own great-grandfather out?" This, of course, is like arguing that a passenger already on board the lifeboat should refrain from pointing out that taking on more will cause it to capsize.

But let's assume, for the sake of argument, that X is Irish-American. Disqualifying him from the debate overlooks the long and painful adjustment to America that the Irish, like every immigrant group, had to make. The Irish too came to the U.S. from what was still basically a pre-modern agricultural society. Throughout the nineteenth century, they displayed social pathologies strikingly similar to those of the current black ghetto: disease, violence, family breakdown, drug addiction (alcohol in those days), and, perhaps not surprisingly, virtually no intermarriage.

Slowly, over generations, America changed the Irish--and they changed themselves. Today, in terms of measures like income, education, and political affiliation, Irish-Americans are more or less indistinguishable from the mainstream, with which they have extensively intermarried. (Well... alcoholism is a little higher. But so are incomes.) In his book *The Economics and Politics of Race: An International Perspective*, the Hoover Institution economist Thomas Sowell describes this as "historically . . . one of the great social transformations of a people." Irish-Americans have earned the hard way their right to opinions about who and how many their country can absorb.

The Irish changed themselves with a great deal of encouragement from a notably stern clergy. But the Roman Catholic Church itself made an adjustment to America. Indeed, the word "Americanization" was invented in the 1850s by a Vermont Yankee convert to Catholicism, Orestes A. Brownson, who argued in his *Brownson's Quarterly Review* that the nativists had a point: the Irish should assimilate to the American nation that had already been formed; the Church should not identify itself with Old World autocracy--as Pius IX, after the 1848 Revolutions in Europe, was inclined to do. Brownson provoked a ferocious controversy. But, today, his view can be seen to have prevailed.

In politics as elsewhere, if you ask a stupid question, you get a stupid answer -- at any rate a terse answer. And asking people if they want their communities to be overwhelmed by weird aliens with dubious habits is a stupid question. The answer is inevitable. Until now in America, chance circumstances and changes in public policy have always combined to change this question before the inevitable answer became too embarrassing. But the greater the number of immigrants, and the greater their difference from the American mainstream, the louder and ruder the answer will be.

The political elite may choose not to hear. Others, however, will.

Closing the Floodgates

AT THE MOMENT, the political elite shows every sign of choosing not to hear. The immigration floodgates were opened by accident in 1965. Opinion polls show most Americans want them shut-- for example, in a recent poll by FAIR*, 84 per cent

wanted Congress to take a more active role in decreasing immigration and stopping the entry of illegal aliens. But the elite's reaction is unexpectedly odd: it stands around idly, alternately ignoring the situation, denouncing anyone uncouth enough to mention it, and, most frequently, indulging in romantic rationalizations ("The more the merrier" "Diversity is strength")

This sort of after-the-fact rationalization infests U.S. immigration history. Thus the much-loved lines on the base of the Statue of Liberty

. . . Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore...

--are not part of the Declaration of Independence or some other pronouncement of the Founding Fathers. Instead, they are the reaction of a young Zionist, Emma Lazarus, to the Russian pogroms following the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. They were added years after the dedication of the statue, which was a gift from France to commemorate the U.S. centennial and originally supposed to symbolize, not "The Mother of Immigrants" in Miss Lazarus's phrase, but "Liberty Lighting the World"--"liberty under law," adds FAIR Chairman Dan Stein, thinking grimly of recent amnesties for illegals.

And they aren't even true. American immigration has typically been quite selective, if only because the cost of passage was (until recently) an effective filter. "... even throughout the early history of the U.S.," admits Julian Simon, "immigrants did not arrive with less education than natives had--contrary to popular belief and contrary to the famous poem by Emma Lazarus ..." Early English settlers included Royalist gentry who went to Virginia, like George Washington's ancestors, and Puritan gentry who went to New England, as Oliver Cromwell and his family once planned to do. And, whatever Yankees may have thought, the Irish immigrants of the 1850s were not the bottom of the barrel. Three-quarters of them were literate; their fares were commonly paid by established extended families.

It was thirty years from the rounding of the Immigration Restriction League in 1894 to the passing of the restrictions in the 1920s. FAIR was rounded in 1979 and the AICF in 1983. So there are some years to go.

Still, there can be little doubt that, this time around, the political elite has been notably more inhibited about responding to the issue. One important reason has been pointed out by Katherine Betts in *Ideology and Immigration*, her study of the parallel Australian situation. Using polling data, Professor Betts showed that while non-traditional immigration was viewed with increasing hostility among ordinary Australians, the university-educated were inclined to favor it. Favoring immigration, she concluded, was "part of a cluster of values defining social status for Australian intellectuals."

The "New Class," as Irving Kristol has called the confluence of educators, bureaucrats, and media professionals, has everywhere emerged as the key sociological fact of late-twentieth-century political economies. Dogmatic attitudes on immigration and race have become a badge of New Class superiority to ordinary people-- and a route to power, since the social stresses resulting from non-traditional immigration are a splendid excuse for further government programs.

Deference to these elite values explains to a significant degree the silence of American conservatives about the current immigration wave--in such striking contrast to the aggressive Americanism of Republicans from Henry Cabot Lodge to

Theodore Roosevelt last time around.

In his first volume of his autobiography, *Making It*, Norman Podhoretz describes the "brutal bargain" by which he says the children of Eastern European Jews were accepted into WASP society at the price of repressing their ethnic mores. Similarly, American conservatives have reached what might be called a "land bargain" with their country's ruling establishment.

Conservatives are now somewhat more likely to be allowed into public debate than in the dark years of the 1950s. But they still must not say anything that impinges upon the truly sacred liberal taboos--above all anything that might be remotely connected with ethnicity or race. And immigration, of course, is inextricably so connected.

Slaves naturally try to curry favor with their masters. Some conservatives, fixated on the issue of economic growth, have apparently calculated that, by emphasizing the (assumed) need for more immigration, they can establish their non-racist credentials and even advance their limited agenda with the liberal elite.

Slaves can even grow to love their chains. Some conservatives have internalized the prohibitions under which they must operate. An example, alas, seems to be Paul Gigot, the otherwise estimable Washington columnist of the Wall Street Journal editorial page. Writing about the question, which became an issue early in the 1992 presidential election cycle, of whether a million Englishmen or a million Zulus would assimilate more easily into Virginia, Gigot expressed good inside-the Beltway distaste. Then he added an economic-growth twist: "The Zulus... would probably work harder than the English."

This comment reveals an utter innocence about the reality of ethnic and cultural differences, let alone about little things like tradition and history--in short, the greater part of the conservative vision. Even in its own purblind terms, it is totally false. All the empirical evidence is that immigrants from developed countries assimilate better than those from underdeveloped countries. It is developed countries that teach the skills required for success in the United States. As Borjas puts it "... the per capita GNP in the United Kingdom is more than six times greater than [that of] the Dominican Republic. It is not surprising that immigrant households originating in the Dominican Republic are about five times more likely to be on welfare than those in the United Kingdom."

But it should not be necessary to explain that the legacy of Shaka and Cetewayo---overthrown just over a century ago---is not that of Alfred the Great, let alone Elizabeth II or any civilized society.

Let's spell it out with an anecdote. Recently, the South African police were perplexed by an epidemic of murders on the black commuter trains between the townships and Johannesburg. Naturally, Nelson Mandela's African National Congress blamed the government. But the victims were from all factions. Now it has emerged that the black operators of the semi-legal private cab services competing with the railroad had paid gangs of those hard-working Zulus to influence consumer preferences by going on board and throwing passengers from the moving trains.

Click [here](#) for Part 2...

[[Home](#)] [[Up](#)] [[Why VDARE?](#)] [[VDARE People Pages](#)] [[VDARE Links](#)] [[Search](#)] [[Archive](#)]
[[Letters](#)] [[Email VDARE Writers](#)] [[Email For Publication](#)] [[Email Not For Publication](#)]
[[Make Tax-Deductible Credit-Card Contribution](#)] [[Center For American Unity](#)]

Copyright © 1999 - 2003 Peter Brimelow



[[Home](#)] [[Why VDARE?](#)] [[VDARE People Pages](#)] [[VDARE Links](#)] [[Search](#)] [[Archive](#)]
[[Letters](#)] [[Email VDARE Writers](#)] [[Email For Publication](#)] [[Email Not For Publication](#)]
[[Make Tax-Deductible Credit-Card Contribution](#)] [[Center For American Unity](#)]

[Peter Brimelow Archive](#)

 [Email a Friend...](#)

 [Printer Friendly Version...](#)

Time to Rethink Immigration? (PART 2)

by Peter Brimelow
from *National Review*, June 22, 1992

Mr. Brimelow is Editor at [VDARE.com](#).



Click [here](#) to return to Part 1...

Asking the Right Questions

SUPPOSING AMERICA'S political elite suddenly decided to notice immigration, what questions should they consider?

Is immigration really necessary to the economy?

Audiences always burst out laughing at one apparently gagless scene in the hit movie *Back to the Future*: the time-transported hero drives up to a gas station in the 1950s, and an army of uniformed attendants leaps forth to pump the gas, clean his windshield, fill his tires, polish his hubcaps, offer him maps, and so on. The joke was in the shock of self-recognition. It was only yesterday--and yet completely forgotten, so accustomed is everyone now to self-service.

'We need immigrants to meet the looming labor shortage/do the dirty work Americans won't do.' This further item from the pro-immigration catechism seems to be particularly resonant for the American conservative movement, deeply influenced by libertarian ideas and open, somewhat, to the concerns of business.

But it has always seemed incongruous, given persistent high levels of unemployment among some American-born groups. Since these groups obviously eat, it would appear that public policy is subsidizing their choosiness about work, thus artificially stimulating the demand for immigrants.

And if there is a looming labor shortage (hotly disputed), it could presumably be countered by natalist policies--encouraging Americans to step up their below-replacement birthrate. Even the current high immigration inflow is exceeded by the 1.6 million abortions in the U.S. each year.

For example, the federal income-tax code could be adjusted to increase the child allowance. In 1950, this provision exempted the equivalent (in 1992 dollars) of \$7,800 for each child; now, after inflation, it exempts only \$2,100. Or the "marriage penalty"--by which a couple pay more in taxes if they marry than if they live together out of wedlock--could be abolished. Or the public-school cartel could be broken up, reducing the crushing costs of educating a child.

But Back to the Future makes a more fundamental point: labor is not an absolute. Free economies are infinitely ingenious at finding methods, and machinery, to economize on labor or any other scarce resource.

The implicit assumption behind the economic argument for immigration appears to be something like this:

Labor x Capital = Economic Growth

So, for any given capital stock, any increase in labor (putting aside the question of its quality) will result in at least some increase in output.

This assumption is just wrong. Typically, technical studies that attempt to account for economic growth find that increases in labor and capital account for at most half and often much less of increases in output. Simon Kuznets's survey of the growth of the West over the last two centuries concluded that increases in labor and physical capital together were responsible for less than 10 per cent of the greatest output surge in human history. The rest seems to be attributable to changes in organization--to technological progress and ideas. Or:

Economic Growth = Labor x Capital x {???

And {???

Back to the Future illustrates this process in action. On the face of it, gas stations have simply substituted capital (the self-service pumps) for labor (gas jockeys). But actually what has happened is more complex: the cost of making the pumps, and of designing the computer system behind them, is far exceeded by the savings on labor, which extend indefinitely into the future. It is reorganization that has resulted in a permanent increase in productivity.

From an economist's standpoint, the factors of production are not absolutes, but a fluid series of conditional interacting relationships. This insight won Julian Simon one of the famous debating victories of our age. In 1980, he bet the well-known liberal doomster Paul Ehrlich that several commodities Ehrlich claimed were running out would in fact be lower in price in 1990, the economy having adjusted in the meantime. They were, and Ehrlich had to pay up. Paradoxically, however, when it comes to immigration, Simon seems to revert to a classic non-economic view: Labor is good, more labor is better.

The economic view of labor has influenced the current immigration debate only in one direction: it is triumphantly produced by the pro-immigration side to refute any unwary critic of immigration who assumes that native-born workers must inevitably be displaced. They aren't, necessarily, in aggregate, because the economy adjusts; and because the increase in the factors of production tends to create new opportunities. "Immigrants not only take jobs," writes Julian Simon, "they make jobs."

Maybe. But missing from the current immigration debate is the fact that this effect operates in the other direction too. On the margin, the economy is probably just as capable of getting along with less labor. Within quite wide boundaries, any change in the labor supply can be swamped by the much larger influence of innovation and technological change.

The historical importance of immigration to the U.S. can be exaggerated. Surprising as it may seem, demographers agree that the American population would be about

half its present size that is, much bigger than Germany's and about as big as Japan's-even if there had been no immigration after 1790. Even more significantly, the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups estimates that immigration did not increase U.S. per-capita output at all. Indeed, both France and Germany outstripped the U.S. in growth of per-capita output in the hundred years after the mid nineteenth century.

Absolute size can be useful while seizing a continent or fighting wars. But in the end it is output per capita that determines living standards. And both proportionately and absolutely, in an increasingly technical age, what will count is not the quantity of people but their quality--and the quality of their ideas.

The {???} factor is the explanation for the great counter-factual episode hanging like the sword of Damocles over contemporary pro-immigration polemics: the success of Japan since World War II. Despite its population of only 125 million and virtually no immigration at all, Japan has grown into the second-largest economy on earth. The Japanese seem to have been able to substitute capital for labor, in the shape of factory robots. And they have apparently steadily reconfigured their economy, concentrating on high value-added production, exporting low-skilled jobs to factories in nearby cheap-labor countries rather than importing the low-skilled labor to Japan.

It is highly significant of the false nature of the American immigration debate that, despite all the public hysteria about Japan, no attempt is ever made to look for lessons in its immigration policy. Incredibly, although his book is called *The Economic Consequences of Immigration*, Julian Simon simply ignores the subject altogether. Asked about it by *Forbes* magazine's Jim Cook, he in effect struck out: "How Japan gets along I don't know. But we may have to recognize that some countries are *sui generis*."

However, Simon's view of the impact of immigrants does include important qualifications, which his enthusiastic acolytes often miss. Simon believes that native-born workers are not necessarily displaced in aggregate. In his book, he frankly and repeatedly acknowledges that "Any labor-force change causes some groups to suffer some harm in the short run... It is true that some particular groups may be injured by a particular group of immigrants ..." (This works in reverse. Agribusiness lobbies for cheap immigrant labor rather than mechanize itself, regardless of the overall cost to the economy. Ironically, agribusiness is itself often subsidized--for example, by federal water projects.)

As it happens, the U.S. contains one particular group that is clearly vulnerable to competition from immigration: blacks. This question has attracted attention for years. Immigration from Europe after the Civil War is sometimes said to have fatally retarded the economic integration of the freed slaves. Conversely, no less an authority than Simon Kuznets felt that the Great Immigration Lull after the 1920s enabled Southern blacks to begin their historic migration to the cities and the economic opportunities of the North.

Blacks themselves take a dim view of immigration, according to opinion polls. In the FAIR poll cited above, 83 per cent of blacks thought Congress should curb immigration. But George Borjas found that blacks living in areas of immigrant concentration did not appear to have suffered significantly reduced incomes compared with those elsewhere. The reason, he theorizes, is that during the years in question--the 1970s--the effect of immigration was overwhelmed by the effects of baby-boomers and women entering the labor market. Now, of course, these factors no longer apply. Additionally, studies of high-immigrant areas may fail to capture a tendency for native-born workers to relocate because of the increased competition. Across the entire country, the wages of native high-school dropouts fell by 10 per cent in the 1980s relative to the wages of more educated workers. Borjas calculates that about a third of that decline is attributable to immigration.

Borjas, moreover, was perturbed by the tendency of low-skilled recent immigrants,

not necessarily to displace American blacks, but to join them in swelling the ranks of the underclass: "Few issues facing the U.S. are as important, and as difficult to resolve, as the persistent problem of poverty in our midst... The empirical evidence presented here suggests that immigration is exacerbating this problem."

Since the Great Society, a significant part of the black community has succumbed to social pathology. There is at least a possibility that this is related to the simultaneous opening of the immigration floodgates. In which case, it is perhaps to current policy, and not to critics of immigration, that the over-used epithet "racist" might best be applied.

Another important Simon qualification, unnoticed by his acolytes, is his concept of "negative human-capital externalities." Most recent immigrants have lower skill levels than natives, he notes. If enough of them were to arrive, they could overwhelm and render less effective the higher skills of the natives. "In other words, if there is a huge flood of immigrants from Backwardia to Richonia, Richonia will become economically similar to Backwardia, with loss to Richonians and little gain to immigrants from Backwardia ... So even if some immigrants are beneficial, a very large number coming from poorer countries ... may have the opposite effect."

This is a crucial theoretical concession. Coupled with the fact that the numbers and type of potential immigrants are unknown, it is the reason Simon quietly declines to follow the logic of his other arguments and endorse completely open borders (as, for example, the Wall Street Journal editorial page has done). Of course, he insists that immigration levels could be much higher than at present. But Richonians in California, Florida, and New York City might not agree.

"You have to accept the free movement of people if you believe in free trade/free markets." You do? It's a more radical proposition than appears at first sight. Third World populations are very large and their wage levels very low--Mexican wages are a tenth of those north of the border, and Mexico is relatively advanced. So calculations of the market-clearing wage in a U.S. with open borders necessarily imply that it must be some fraction of its present level. This arrangement might optimize global economic utility. But it can hardly improve American social harmony.

However, a calculation of this sort requires impossible assumptions. The fact is that a belief in free markets does not commit you to free immigration. The two are quite distinct. Even Julian Simon, although he favors immigration, says explicitly that immigration's benefits are not from "trade-like effects":

Contrary to intuition, the theory of the international trade of goods is quite inapplicable to the international movement of persons. There is no immediate large consumer benefit from the movement of persons that is analogous to the international exchange of goods, because the structure of supply is not changed in the two countries as a whole, as it is when trade induces specialization in production ... the shifts due to international migration benefit only the migrant.

On a practical level, free trade actually tends to operate as a substitute for immigration. Hence the Japanese have factories in the Philippines rather than Filipinos in Japan. And Victorian Britain, with its grand strategy of "splendid isolation" from the quarrels of Europe, combined total free trade with almost no immigration, a policy that satisfied Liberal "Little Englanders" and Tory Imperialists alike.

In theory, free trade with Mexico should help reduce the current immigrant flood by providing work south of the border. In practice, however, "free-trade negotiations" (a paradox: what's to negotiate?) often get captured by political elites seeking to favor client constituencies. Rumors that the current talks with Mexico might lead, absurdly, to an increase in immigration suggest this insidious process is well under way.

A commitment to free trade and free markets does not mean that you would sell

your mother if the price was right. The free market necessarily exists within a social framework. And it can function only if the institutions in that framework are appropriate. For example, a defined system of private property is now widely agreed to be one essential precondition. Economists have a word for these preconditions: the "metamarket." Some degree of ethnic and cultural coherence may be among them. Thus immigration may be a metamarket issue.

At the very least, a diverse population increases what in economics-speak are called "transaction costs." Dealing with people whom you don't know and therefore can't trust requires expensive precautions. I suspect this is one factor behind the legalism infesting business practices in the U.S., as compared to Britain. Beyond this, capitalism generates inequality and therefore envy. And such emotions can be much more intense across ethnic and racial lines--witness the fate of the Korean storekeepers in Los Angeles.

This is not an unprecedented insight. Friedrich von Hayek, the first classical liberal to win the Nobel Prize for economics, used to advance a sort of sociobiological argument for the apparently immortal appeal of socialism. Cities and civilization have come very late in human history, he pointed out. Almost all mankind's experience has been in small hunter-gatherer bands. Face-to-face relationships are still much more comprehensible to us than impersonal ones. Thus an increase in rent is blamed on the greed and obnoxiousness of the individual landlord, and provokes an irresistible urge to bash him with rent controls, despite all the evidence that this leads merely to shortages and inequity. And, to extend Hayek's argument, it is obviously easier to demonize a landlord if his features are visibly alien.

Another classical liberal Nobel Laureate, Milton Friedman, has speculated that the culture of the English-speaking world itself may be, from an economic standpoint, *sui generis* . . . in Simon's phrase. I interviewed him for *Forbes* magazine in 1988:

FRIEDMAN:... The history of the world is the history of tyranny and misery and stagnation. Periods of growth are exceptional, very exceptional.

BRIMELOW: You've mentioned what you see as the institutional prerequisites for capitalism. Do you think there might be cultural prerequisites too?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes. For example, truthfulness. The success of Lebanon as a commercial entrepot was to a significant degree because the merchants' word could be trusted.

It cut down transaction costs.

It's a curious fact that capitalism developed and has really come to fruition in the English-speaking world. It hasn't really made the same progress even in Europe--certainly not in France, for instance. I don't know why this is so, but the fact has to be admitted.

Eschewing these more subtle considerations, George Borjas focuses on the quantifiable. His conclusion is stark. "The economic arguments for immigration simply aren't decisive," he told me recently. "You have to make a political case--for example, does the U.S. have to take Mexican immigrants to provide a safety valve and keep Mexico stable?"

Put it another way: for the U.S., immigration is not an economic necessity. It is a luxury. Like all luxuries, it can help-or it can hurt.

Is immigration really beneficial to society?

Forty-four years ago, Richard Weaver published a book the title of which, at least, convinced the conservative movement: *Ideas Have Consequences*. It is now time to recognize a further truth: *Immigration Has Consequences*.

The crudest consequences relate to political power. Because many libertarians and economic-growth conservatives are so reluctant to admit this logical possibility, it is worth emphasizing that there are plenty of examples of immigrants and their descendants threatening the political balance of a state (polity), from the Uitlanders in the nineteenth-century Boer Republics to the Indian politicians recently elected to govern Fiji and promptly deposed by the ethnically Fijian army. And how about this chilling comment from the Harvard Encyclopedia?

In obtaining land grants in Texas, Anglo immigrants agreed to become Mexican citizens, obey Mexican laws, accept the official Catholic faith, learn Spanish, and take other steps to become fully assimilated as law-abiding citizens. However, over the years, it became clear that these settlers, now Anglo-Mexicans, were not becoming integrated into the nation and that Anglo immigration had become a problem . . . The strains and disagreements ultimately led to the Texas Revolution in 1835.

Er, quite.

These political consequences need not threaten the integrity of the state (polity)--just its foreign policy.

Thus domestic ethnic-group pressure clearly plays a role in Washington's essentially contradictory attitudes to the white settler communities of southern Africa and the Middle East.

But probably the most important consequences are cultural. "The most obvious fact about the history of racial and ethnic groups," writes Thomas Sowell in *The Economics and Politics of Race*, "is how different they have been--and still are." Sowell's work, carried on in *Ethnic America: A History*, conclusively demonstrates that cultural patterns are pervasive, powerful, and remarkably persistent, even after generations of living under common institutions, as in the United States. (Similarly, David Hackett Fischer's monumental *Albion's Seed* recently traced America's dominant folkways all the way back to four distinct waves of colonial immigration from different regions of Britain.)

"But aren't these consequences good?" Naturally, there isn't anything in the pro-immigration script about cultural consequences. However, this is the usual reaction if you insist on raising the point. It's embarrassing, of course. In the current climate, it is impossible to discuss the failings of any ethnic group.

But look at it this way: Thomas Sowell's work shows that cultural traits, such as attitudes to work and education, are intrinsically related to economic success. Germans, Japanese, and Jews are successful wherever they are in the world. Conversely, the work of George Borjas and others shows that national origin, a proxy for culture, is an excellent predictor of economic failure, as measured by propensity to go on welfare. In a recent paper, Borjas has demonstrated that disparities among the 1880-to-1920 immigrant groups have persisted for as much as four generations. Thus there can be absolutely no question that the cultural characteristics of current immigrant groups will have consequences for the U.S.--in this case, economic consequences--far into the future.

The same argument applies to crime. Random street crime, the great scandal of American cities since the 1960s, is clearly related to impulsiveness and present orientation, a key cultural variable. More significant, however, is organized crime. This has typically been ethnically based, partly because it reduces the criminals' transaction costs and because such groups are difficult to penetrate.

In recent years the Mafia or Cosa Nostra has been in decline, not least because of the acculturation of Italian-Americans. But this is "dirty work" that some of the post-1965 immigrant groups are positively anxious to do--more violently, particularly in the burgeoning drug business, than the Mafia ever was. There are several such new "mafias," staffed by Russian Jews, Hong Kong Chinese, Colombians, and even

less well-known communities like the Chaldeans--Iraqi Christians whose convenience stores in the Detroit ghetto are centers of criminal activity.

Today such news would be judged unfit to print regardless of its accuracy. Researchers find that official figures on immigrant and ethnic crime patterns are rarely collected. That certain ethnic cultures are more crime-prone than others, however, must be considered a real possibility.

Curiously, Congress appears to have shaken off its general paralysis to recognize that immigration can have cultural consequences--for Pacific Islanders. Five U.S. territories, American Samoa, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Marianas, and Palau, have been given control over immigration to protect their ethnic majorities. In American Samoa and the Northern Marianas, U.S. citizens cannot even own land unless they are Samoan, Chamorro, or Carolinian.

This double standard has incensed an extremely erudite and energetic professional writer in Rye, New York, Joseph E. Fallon. Fallon argues that controlling immigration is simply a question of American self-determination. And he is attempting to organize a class-action law suit challenging current policy on the grounds of the 1948 Genocide Convention, which banned "deliberately inflicting upon a [national] group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."

Which, after all, is no crazier than much liberal litigation.

Is immigration really good for (ahem) the Republicans?

The fate of the Republican Party may not be of concern to the political elite as a whole. But it should worry those aspiring members of the elite who also consider themselves conservatives.

Ethnicity is destiny in American politics. This point was made definitively in Kevin Phillips's brilliant *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1968), which demonstrated that ethnic settlement patterns had an amazingly persistent influence on voting patterns. Phillips predicted on the basis of demography that the Republicans would replace the Democrats as the majority party. And he was undeniably right in the presidential contest, even if timid and unimaginative leadership has squandered the opportunity on the congressional level.

As a glance around any of their meetings will tell you, the Republicans are the party of the American majority; the Democrats are the party of the American minorities. On its WASP foundation, the Republican Party has been able to add the children of each immigrant wave as they assimilate. This was the unmistakable subtext of the 1988 presidential election. With a Greek-American nominee, and implicitly anti-WASP attacks on George Bush's "preppie-ness," the Democrats hoped to hold the 1880-to-1920 immigrant wave. But they failed, just as nominating John F. Kennedy in 1960 did not prevent the continued defection of Irish-Americans.

The post-1965 immigrants, however, are overwhelmingly visible minorities. These are precisely the groups that the Republican Party has had the most difficulty recruiting. And, Jack Kemp please note, this is not necessarily a question of the Republicans' making nice, or nicer, to minorities. It may reflect the more divergent minorities' different values, and their more radical feeling of alienation from white American society. Current immigration policy is inexorably reinforcing Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.

The strained sound you hear is the conservative leadership whistling as they pass by the rainbow. Prohibited by the Bland Bargain from discussing the problem, they have indulged in a frenzy of wishful thinking. "We get quite a good vote from some Hispanic groups." Well, Hispanics are not quite as Democratic as blacks--that's a statistical impossibility--but the Republicans still face an uphill struggle. Even the much-lauded Cuban vote has actually been quite split, electing the likes of Claude

Pepper and Dante Fascell to Congress. And Republican success with Hispanics, as with other minorities, is often at the expense of conservative principles. 'West Indians are different.' Some West Indians do appear to have been more economically successful than American blacks, although it must be said that nowadays part of their enterprise goes into drug "posses" and car-theft rings. However, the skill level of the post-1965 wave of West Indian immigrants has deteriorated sharply. Caribbean immigrants are now the most prone of all to welfare dependency. And anyway, the political consequences were always illusory. Shirley Chisholm and Stokely Carmichael are both of West Indian descent. "The Asians are small-business types, education-minded, family-oriented--they're natural Republicans." So were the Jews, and look how they vote--still overwhelmingly and outspokenly Democratic despite the best efforts of a brilliant generation of conservative Jewish intellectuals. And Hawaii, where Asians predominate, is a Democratic stronghold. The truth is that no one really knows how the Asians will vote. But since 1965 they have become a minority twice as large as the Jews, and potentially at least as influential.

Is immigration really good for the environment?

American liberalism has survived the loss of its traditional issue, economic management, by improvising new ones. And environmentalism is one of the most important, both because it particularly appeals to the vocal upper middle class and because it appears to necessitate an interventionist government. Yet the single biggest problem for the environment is the fact that the U.S. population, quite unusually in the developed world, is still growing quickly. Immigration is currently an unusually large factor in U.S. population growth.

Like the impact of immigration on native workers, the relationship between population and pollution is subtler than it looks. A primitive band of slash-and-burn agriculturalists can cause more devastation than a much larger community of modern ex-urbanites with sealed sewage systems and manicured horse farms.

But only within limits. Something has clearly got to give if the population of California grows from 20 million in 1970 to 60 million by 2020, which is Leon Bouvier's upper-limit projection. (His lower-limit projection: a mere 44 million. Phooey!) The fragile desert ecologies of the Southwest may not be utterly destroyed. But they must be transformed. California will cease to be the Golden State and become the Golden Subdivision.

This prospect is presumably anathema to true environmentalists, who value wilderness in itself. But although a few were active in rounding FAIR, most of the professional environmentalist community in Washington avoid the issue. Which is a measure of the extent to which they have been co-opted by the liberal establishment--just like the civil-rights lobby, which never voices the anti-immigration sentiments widespread among the black masses.

No reason, however, why conservatives should not use the immigration issue to wrong-foot them all.

Is the U.S. still culturally capable of absorbing immigrants?

Let's be clear about this: The American experience with immigration has been a triumphant success. It has so far transcended anything seen in Europe as to make the application of European lessons an exercise to be performed with care.

But in the late twentieth century, the economic and political culture of the U.S. has changed significantly-- from classical liberalism to an interventionist welfare statism. In the previous two hundred years of U.S. history, a number of tried-and-true, but undeniably tough, techniques of assimilation had been perfected. Today, they have been substantially abandoned. Earlier waves of immigrants were basically free to succeed or fail. And many failed: as much as a third of the 1880-to-1920

immigrants returned to their native lands. But with the current wave, public policy interposes itself, with the usual debatable results.

"You can't blame the immigrants for our bad policies." Of course you can't. But if there's a shower when you've got pneumonia, you don't blame the rain. You just stay indoors.

Some of public subsidies to immigrants are direct, like welfare. Others are indirect, such as the wholly new idea that immigrant children should be taught in their own language, thus transferring part of the costs of immigration from the immigrant to the American taxpayer. New York's public-school system now offers courses in more than a hundred languages--and is hunting for teachers of Albanian, who will probably themselves be immigrants.

Pro-immigration advocates are fighting furiously to defend the proposition that subsidies to immigrants are not a net cost to native-born Americans because of the taxes immigrants pay. But they are clearly losing.

George Borjas's most recent estimate is that immigrants' cash welfare benefits alone cost about \$1 billion more than is paid in taxes each year. (Tellingly, immigrants prone to welfare dependency seem to get more addicted as they assimilate.) And he points out that there is no guarantee that any increase in total economic output from immigration will compensate those specific Americans paying taxes in high-immigrant areas.

Whatever the academic argument, Wall Street in its unideological, money-grubbing way is already pulling back its snout. As the investment firm Sanford C. Bernstein commented tersely in downgrading California's bond rating last year: "The primary reasons for the State's credit decline are above-average population growth and shifting demographics ... the degree of public assistance required by two of the fastest growing groups, Latinos and political/ethnic refugees, is substantially higher than that of the general population." Governor Pete Wilson has been trying to control welfare and get more remedial federal aid. But he has only himself to blame. As a U.S. senator, he worked hard for the 1986 amnesty for illegal immigrants favored by agricultural interests.

Ultimately, however, any overall break-even calculation is irrelevant. The nature of averages dictates that many immigrants must get more than they give. And any public subsidies must affect whatever demand/ supply balance exists for immigrants. A year for one student in the New York City public-school system, for example, involves an average taxpayer expenditure greater than the per-capita national income of Haiti. National health care, if enacted, could be an even greater magnet.

And it's not just the American economic culture that has changed. So has the political culture. Ethnically fueled "multiculturalism" taught in the public schools, as described by Lawrence Auster and by the eminently establishmentarian Arthur Schlesinger in his current best-seller *The Disuniting of America*, raises the question of whether there is still an "American Idea"-- and if so, what is it?

Actually, the outlines of what might be described as the new American Anti-Idea are already appallingly clear. It's a sort of neosocialism, derived from what Thomas Sowell calls "the Civil Rights Vision" and amounting to a sort of racial spoils system. Government power is used not to achieve economic efficiency, which traditional socialism can no longer promise, but ethnic equity--most importantly, the expropriation of "discrimination."

That's private discrimination, of course. Government-sponsored discrimination is not merely acceptable but mandatory, in the form of "affirmative action" quotas. "Quotas were originally supposed to be remedial," says Professor Frederick R. Lynch of Claremont College, author of *Invisible Victims: White Males and the Crisis of Affirmative Action*. "Now they are being justified by affirmative-action professionals

as a way of 'managing diversity.'" That "diversity," needless to say, is being substantially introduced into the U.S. by current immigration policy.

Indeed, absurd as it may appear, all brand-new immigrants from the right "protected class"--black, Hispanic, Asian--count toward government quota requirements that were allegedly imposed to help native-born Americans. Hence a number of the African PhDs teaching at American colleges. The 1986 Immigration Act prohibited discrimination against legalized "undocumented" aliens and set up an office in the Justice Department to enforce this new law.

Symptomatic of the American Anti-Idea is the emergence of a strange anti-nation inside the U.S.--the so-called "Hispanics." The various groups of Spanish-speaking immigrants are now much less encouraged to assimilate to American culture. Instead, as a result of ethnic lobbying in Washington, they are treated by U.S. government agencies as a homogeneous "protected class," even though many of them have little in common with one another. (Indeed, some are Indian-language speakers from Latin America.) And they have been supplied with "leaders" financed to a significant extent by the Ford Foundation.

In effect, Spanish-speakers are still being encouraged to assimilate. But not to America.

Many current public policies have an unmistakable tendency to deconstruct the American nation. Apart from official bilingualism and multiculturalism, these policies include: multilingual ballots; defining citizenship so as to include all children born here--even the children of illegals; the abandonment of English as a prerequisite for citizenship; the erosion of citizenship as the sole qualification for voting; the extension of welfare and education benefits as a right to illegals and their children; congressional and state legislative apportionment based on legal and illegal populations.

Finally, there is a further ominous change in American political culture since 1910: a peculiar element of emotionalism that has entered intellectual life.

Julian Simon in *The Economic Consequences of Immigration* makes an admirable effort to be honest about his underlying motives: "Perhaps a few words about my tastes are appropriate. I delight in looking at the variety of faces I see on the subway when I visit New York . . . [telling innocent visiting schoolgirls] about the Irish in New York and about other groups too--I get tears in my eyes, as again I do now in recalling the incident." This is obviously somewhat different from my own reaction to the New York subway, although presumably we are both also studying those faces to see if their owners plan to mug us.

But in debate Professor Simon is notably quick to attribute unattractive motives if anyone dares raise America's shifting ethnic balance--although logically the onus should be on him to show why the balance should be shifted, and what he has against the American nation. To *Forbes* magazine, Simon was flatly dogmatic: "The notion of wanting to keep out immigrants in order to keep our institutions and our values is pure prejudice." This intense reaction surely goes beyond "taste."

Even more significant was this recent column from A.M. Rosenthal in the *New York Times*:

Almost always now, when I read about Haitians who risk the seas to get to this country but wind up behind barbed wire, I think of an illegal immigrant I happen to know myself, and of his daughters and his son.

Then a shiver of shame and embarrassment goes through me...

The illegal immigrant was--Rosenthal's father. He came here from Russia via Canada.

Many years later, when his children told the story of their father and his

determination to find work in America, to hell with borders, people smiled in admiration of this man. And always, his children were filled with pride about him ... I know that if he had been born in Haiti or lived there, he would have broken every law that stood between him and work in the U.S.

In short, because one generation of Americans failed to catch an illegal immigrant, their children must accept more, transforming their nation into a charity ward.

Imagine what a quick pickup [a] lobby, or parade, demanding succor for the Haitians could do if it were headed by a few Irish-American cardinals, a batch of rabbis, and the presidents of Eastern European, Greek, Italian, Arab, and Turkish organizations. American Blacks and Wasps welcome too ! . . . Even reluctantly recognizing some economic limitations, this country should have the moral elegance to accept neighbors who flee countries where life is terror and hunger, and are run by murderous gangs left over from dictatorships we ourselves maintained and cosseted.

If that were a qualification for entry into our golden land, the Haitians should be welcomed with song, embrace, and memories.

Be careful about those embraces. A significant proportion of Haitians are reported to be HIV positive.

The search for an explanation for the paralysis of the American immigration debate, and the drive to transform America from a nation into a charity ward, need go no further than this fretful psychodrama in the mind of the man who, as editor of the New York Times, substantially set the national media agenda.

Actually, Rosenthal is unfair to Jewish organizations. They have generally supported immigration. FAIR's Director of Media Outreach, Ira Mehlman--who like his chairman, Dan Stein, is himself Jewish--looks depressed at the thought. "They still think it's 1939," he says. "But even if we took all the Soviet Jews, and all the Israelis, that would still only be 6 million people." As it is, FAIR expects 15 million immigrants in the 1990s.

End of Chapter

NEXT YEAR will see the hundredth anniversary of Frederick Jackson Turner's famous lecture on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." The Superintendent of the Census had just announced that there was no longer a continuous line of free, unsettled land visible on the American map. Closing with the frontier, said Turner, was "the first period of American history." A century later, it may be time to close the second period of American history with the announcement that the U.S. is no longer an "immigrant country."

Because just as the American nation was made with unusual speed, so it is perfectly possible that it could be unmade. On speeded-up film, the great cloud formations boil up so that they dominate the sky. But they also unravel and melt away.

And why do I, an immigrant, care? For one reason, I am the father of a nine-month-old American, Alexander James Frank. He seems to like it here. A second reason: just as Voltaire said in the eighteenth century that every man has two countries, his own and France, so in this century no civilized person can be indifferent to the fate of America.

Beyond this ... I have an infant memory, more vivid even than my later purgatory in INS. I am playing with my twin brother in the back yard of my aunt's home in a Lancashire cotton town. Suddenly, great whooping giants in U.S. Air Force uniforms (although with the crystal-clear recollection of childhood, I now realize that they had the lithe figures of very young men) leap out and grab us. We are terrified and struggle free.

Which always made me feel bad in subsequent years. They were far from home,

lodging with my aunt. And they just wanted a souvenir photograph.

They were the cold-war tail of that vast host that had come to Britain during World War II, when the whole town had resounded night and day to the roar of B-24 engines on the test beds at the great Burtonwood airbase, and everyone had been glad to hear them. They were, as Robert E. Lee once described his troops, not professional soldiers, but citizens who had taken up arms for their country. However, Housman's "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries" applies to them:

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;

They stood, and earth's foundations stay.

I don't know what happened to them, although I remember one young wife showing us the first color slides we had ever seen, of Southern California, and explaining that they hoped to move to this breathtaking paradise when they got out of the service. They will be old now, if they are still alive. I don't know what they or their children think of the unprecedented experiment being performed, apparently by accident and certainly with no apprehension of the possible consequences, upon the nation they so bravely represented.

I do know, however, that they ought to be asked.

POSTSCRIPT:

"At a Cabinet meeting today, Attorney General William P. Barr said nearly one-third of the first 6,000 [Los Angeles] riot suspects arrested and processed through the court system were illegal aliens, according to a senior Administration official. Barr has not proposed any special effort to have them deported, a Justice Department spokesman said."

--*Washington Post*, May 6, 1992

[[Home](#)] [[Up](#)] [[Why VDARE?](#)] [[VDARE People Pages](#)]
[[VDARE Links](#)] [[Search](#)] [[Archive](#)] [[Letters](#)]
[[Email VDARE Writers](#)] [[Email For Publication](#)]
[[Email Not For Publication](#)]
[[Make Tax-Deductible Credit-Card Contribution](#)]
[[Center For American Unity](#)]

Copyright © 1999 - 2003 Peter Brimelow



[[Home](#)] [[Why VDARE?](#)] [[VDARE People Pages](#)] [[VDARE Links](#)] [[Search](#)] [[Archive](#)] [[Letters](#)]
[[Email VDARE Writers](#)] [[Email For Publication](#)] [[Email Not For Publication](#)]
[[Make Tax-Deductible Credit-Card Contribution](#)] [[Center For American Unity](#)]

[Peter Brimelow Archive](#)

 [Email a Friend...](#)

 [Printer Friendly Version...](#)

June 07, 2003

I Am Become Death, The Shatterer Of Worlds

Peter Brimelow note to VDARE.COM readers: *I was lured into this symposium on the somewhat [goo-gooish](#) British-based debate site [openDemocracy.com](#) by Anthony Browne, environment editor of the London Times and occasional VDARE.COM [contributor](#). He was already embroiled there, opposing the *People Flow* report, basically a proposal to institutionalize Third World immigration into the Europe Union. Obviously, they have client-seeking bureaucrats and nation-subverting immigration enthusiasts across the Atlantic too. My comment was posted on June 3 under the headline [The migration time-bomb: American lessons for Europe](#). Note that the editors translated miles into kilometers and British into European. Ugh.*

[openDemocracy editors original note: **Will mass immigration prove a similar threat to the integrity of European society and culture as it does to America s? For the author of [Alien Nation](#), the book which helped to catalyze the modern anti-immigration argument in the US, the current great wave from third to first world is undesirable, economically unnecessary, and driven by a misplaced sense of guilt over past racism and colonialism.**]

By [Peter Brimelow](#)

openDemocracy s *People Flow* debate is a poignant moment for

me. I'm the editor of an American webzine, VDARE.COM, focused on immigration and the national question well-defined in [Anthony Browne's](#) terms as whether a country has a **right to sustain its own culture**.

Yet I am also an English immigrant to the United States, with a sojourn in Canada, who is sometimes credited with restarting the modern immigration debate in my adopted country with a [cover story](#) in *National Review* magazine and a subsequent, much-denounced, [book](#), *Alien Nation*.

(I tell audiences in America, where public discourse is frequently conducted in economistic terms, that in criticizing immigration policy I am just an immigrant doing a dirty job. They laugh, but it's true as will be confirmed below).

As I write this, I can see from my office window more than fifteen miles (twenty-four kilometers) across northern Connecticut's [Litchfield Hills](#) (spelt, be it noted, with a t this area still bears the imprint of Puritan settlers from England's East Anglia and Midlands). Almost all of it is woodland. In early summer, it's a rolling sea of green foliage. Ironically, this was not the case 150 years ago. The area was stripped bare by intensive subsistence farming and the quest for charcoal to fuel the early industrial revolution here. But now the forests have returned.

I must say that I have found myself grieving that the epicenter of the industrial revolution, the north of England where I grew up, will never get a similar respite. The classic patchwork fieldscape of the Cheshire plain, which I have carried in my mind's eye since early childhood, is now being eroded so quickly by sprawl that I find it painful to go back.

To that extent, Rosamund McDougall's [riposte](#) to the *People Flow* concept is unanswerable. Population growth means sprawl. But population growth in the first world is now not inevitable: it is being imported by immigration policy. This is true in the US too, and on a gigantic scale. Americans of all races have brought their family size down to the point where the Census Bureau projects that the US population would stabilize by 2050 at 280-300 million but with the current mass immigration, it is projected to soar to 400-500 million.

In effect, first world governments are second-guessing their peoples on population size. Perhaps unlike McDougall, I don't necessarily anticipate ecological collapse because of this. I can envisage my woodland vista being carved into malls, freeways and suburbs full of moderately healthy people. (Birdlife is a different matter).

But it won't be the same. I would regret it. This is a value judgment, of course. But so what?

California, I tell American audiences, will cease to be the Golden State and become the Golden Subdivision (American for housing estate). They don't laugh quite as much at this. It's already coming all too visibly true here; and in a small space like Britain, there is even less room for error.

Five warnings from America

The debate in the United States offers five main pointers to Europeans.

- First, *immigration is economically unnecessary*. It was a British economist, the great Peter Bauer, who first and most forcefully [made this point](#) to me. You can't reason from more people to more production. The key factor, rather, is technical innovation new ideas.

Thus, the idea that third world immigration is necessary to support ageing first world baby boomers does not add up. (Of course, it is always possible that first world governments will make a mess of things and turn to immigration to stave off the problem).

In the US, the validity of Bauer's point has been born out by the National Research Council's 1997 compendium, [The New Americans](#) reflecting the consensus among labor economists. It found the net aggregate economic benefit to native-born Americans from the enormous influx accidentally triggered by the 1965 immigration act is nugatory less than \$10 billion a year, in an economy of \$10 trillion.

Immigrants do increase gross domestic product (GDP), but they receive most of the benefit themselves. Moreover, this doesn't count transfers like education, which amount to a significant net loss. The *Economist* has rightly [characterized](#) this as chickenfeed without, typically, altering its generally romantic view of immigration. *America is being transformed for nothing*. I have no doubt the same is true for Europe.

- Second, *the welfare state has changed everything*. The US has experienced mass immigration before, in 1890-1920. And it has experienced a welfare state (more accurately, a *transfer* state, because free education and free emergency-room health care are included) since President Roosevelt's [New Deal](#) of the 1930s. But it has never experienced both together.

The transfer state has completely altered the incentives facing immigrants. In the US, whereas up to 40% of the 1890-1920 great wave went back home (something not much noted in this country's pervasive pro-immigration mythology), now around 90% of the post-1965 great

wave remain. In effect, they are paid to stay, even if they don't like it here which is clearly a factor in the current [non-assimilation](#) of Hispanics. Again, mass immigration's incompatibility with the welfare state has been publicly [recognized](#) by economists like Nobel laureates Milton Friedman and Gary Becker. But it has not penetrated popular debate. Again, I have no doubt the same is true of Europe.

- Third, *refugees are a false issue*. It is amazing to me, growing up in Britain during the great retreat from empire, to read arguments like [Gil Loescher's](#) that take for granted that Britain and Europe still have responsibility for the displaced of the third world. Of course, this sense of responsibility is, in considerable part, what motivated imperialism, especially the late 19th century partition of Africa, urged on by missionaries who wanted to protect their flocks from the slave trade. Rudyard Kipling [called](#) it the White Man's Burden. (Presumably it's now the White Person's Burden). But there can be no responsibility without power and Europeans have eschewed power along with their empires. End of story, as we say here.

Moreover, our experience in the US is that refugees invariably turn out to be nothing more noble than expedited, subsidized, politically-connected immigrants. Thus, America's refugee program was effectively [hijacked](#) in the 1980s on behalf of Soviet Jews. The refugee lobby itself needs to be viewed in the context of public choice economics the perception, for which [James Buchanan](#) won an economics [Nobel prize](#), that policy makers as a class have their own economic interests, which (amazingly) tend to influence their policies. Refugee lobbyists become [interest groups](#) funded, of course, by the taxpayer.

One current [scandal](#) produced by this corrupt system is the importation into small towns across America of large numbers of illiterate, primitive Somali Bantu a group with which the US has no historical relationship whatever because refugee lobbyists rejected the much cheaper expedient of resettlement in Africa which would, of course, have deprived them of clients. Again, I sense the same in Europe.

- Fourth, *the real issue is white guilt*. At the beginning of [Alien Nation](#), I wrote:

There is a sense in which current immigration policy is Adolf Hitler's posthumous revenge on America. The U.S. political elite emerged from the war passionately concerned to cleanse itself from all taints of racism and xenophobia. Eventually, it enacted the Immigration Act of 1965. And this, quite accidentally, triggered a renewed mass immigration, so huge and so systematically different from anything that had gone before as to transform and ultimately, perhaps, to destroy the one unquestioned victor of World War II: the American nation, as it had evolved by the middle of the twentieth century.

I stand by these words. It is because Americans are still paralyzed by the accusation of racism, further exacerbated by the struggle over civil rights, that uninhibited immigrants like myself (or the Cuban-born Harvard economist [George Borjas](#)) can play a role in the American immigration debate.

Obviously, the same trick is being imported into Britain, judging by Ali Rattansi's emotional attempt to smear Anthony Browne. The one virtue of [Rattansi's](#) piece is that he (no doubt inadvertently) answers the national question whether the nation-state, the political expression of a particular people, can and should continue to exist. Rattansi's answer: no. (**Even a democratic decision to opt for supposed racial purity is not one that is ethically defensible or acceptable within contemporary global norms of human rights, themselves an outcome of the fight against Nazism.**)

At least, that's Rattansi's answer in the case of the British. Historically, they have indeed had the bad taste to be a white nation. But the third world is a different matter. In researching *Alien Nation*, I contacted every major immigrant-sending third world country and asked how I could, as an American citizen, emigrate to them. All of them said, with varying degrees of politeness, that it was effectively impossible. The Indians said it was very difficult unless I was of Indian origin. For them, apparently, racial purity is defensible *and* acceptable.

- Fifth, *immigration is vitally important*. Denial is the first stage of the immigration debate, as it is supposed to be with terminal disease. Obviously, some **openDemocracy** contributors are still in this stage.

In the US, we can point to the bottom line: in 1960, whites were 88.6% of the American population. Then came the 1965 immigration act. By 2000, whites were down to 75.1%. Some time after 2050, the Census Bureau projects, whites will become a minority.

This is a demographic transformation without precedent in the history of the world all brought about by public policy. And Europe is starting down the same path.

I reject the notion that those of us who question this policy have to show what's wrong with it. Instead, I believe it is incumbent upon those who favor this extraordinary transformation to explain what's right with it and what makes them think it will work.

Otherwise, it must be said of the West's late 20th century immigration disaster, in the words that J. Robert Oppenheimer [quoted](#) from the *Bhagavad Gita* on witnessing the first atomic bomb: **I am become death, the shatterer of worlds.**

[[Home](#)] [[Up](#)] [[Why VDARE?](#)] [[VDARE People Pages](#)] [[VDARE Links](#)] [[Search](#)] [[Archive](#)]
[[Letters](#)] [[Email VDARE Writers](#)] [[Email For Publication](#)] [[Email Not For Publication](#)]
[[Make Tax-Deductible Credit-Card Contribution](#)] [[Center For American Unity](#)]