

Stephen Macedo, Princeton University

Israel Conference on Democratic Backsliding, January 1-3, 2019

“Populism, Migration, and Premature Cosmopolitanism?”¹

draft: please do not quote without permission.

Submitted Abstract In the US, the UK, and elsewhere, populism has been (to borrow a phrase from Jane Mansbridge) democracy’s way of shaking the elites up: telling them that they have missed something important. The domestic losers from globalization have asserted themselves – in the cases of Brexit and Trump – in ways that justifiably shock enlightened opinion. Elites have paid too little heed to the domestic distributive impact of high immigration and globalized trade. Yet along with justified grievances, immigration and globalization are also spurring forms of nativism and demagoguery that threaten both democratic deliberation and human rights. The challenge now is to find reasonable ways of addressing this new politics of resentment: ways that recognize that egalitarian liberalism and social democracy are national projects, while also acknowledging our interconnections, duties, and moral obligations to those beyond our borders.

Donald Trump: “America First will be the major and overriding theme of my administration.”

Michael Walzer: “The idea of distributive justice presupposes a bounded world...: a group of people committed to dividing, exchanging, and sharing social goods, first of all amongst themselves.” Spheres of Justice.

John Rawls: “the national interest of a just state is defined by the principles of [domestic] justice... . Therefore such a nation will aim above all to maintain and to preserve its just institutions and the conditions that make them possible.” Theory of Justice, rev. ed., 333.

The election of Donald Trump came as a huge surprise, and his anti-immigration stance and appeal to American nativist sentiments played a significant role.² The Brexit vote was a harbinger, reflecting middle class upset with globalization and especially immigration. Now, across Europe and much of the developed world, reactions against globalization and especially immigration are driving a reassessment of the relationship between domestic and global governance.

Immigrants and refugees are convenient scapegoats, and Liav Orgad is right to point out that anti-immigrant political appeals are rife with exaggeration and outright

¹ I am very grateful to Ben Hofmann and Jane Mansbridge, both of whom saved me from a number of mistakes and made extremely helpful suggestions on an earlier draft.

² I don’t want to exaggerate his distinctiveness: mainly, he won and governs as a Republican.

misrepresentation concerning negative effects of migration on receiving societies.³ The falsehoods are often tinged with nativism and racism.

There are also real grievances to which elites have paid insufficient attention. Globalization has its losers as well as its winners, and less-well-educated working class people in the West have often been among the losers.

I have long worried that progressives in the US have not taken sufficiently seriously the domestic distributive impact of immigration and globalization more broadly.⁴ Progressives and academics have a cosmopolitan bias; we think of ourselves as “citizens of the world” to a much greater extent than most Americans. And whereas elites tend to live in prosperous metropolises those left behind remain largely invisible in rural areas and “rust belt” cities, at least until an election like America’s in 2016.

Social scientists also often have a utilitarian bias when it comes to thinking about how to justify immigration and other policies. It is frequently noted that immigration is a net positive for the US: most Americans are made better. Fair enough. But it may be that the bottom 20% or 30% of Americans are made worse off. And that presents us with a problem from the standpoint of social justice: we have special obligations to our least well-off fellow citizens. We have special justificatory burdens to our fellow citizens who are at the bottom that we do not have to poor people in the world generally. Insufficient attention to the losers from globalization has contributed to the politics of resentment.

The divisions here are not simple left-right. Trump, and before him Patrick Buchanan, have opposed free trade and high immigration policies supported by many Republican and Democratic elites, libertarians, and neo-liberal business interests, but so did Caesar Chavez and many labor Unions. Ralph Nader had a nuanced position on immigration and called open borders “totally absurd.”⁵ Rawls very specifically warned Europeans about the European Union arguing, in an exchange of letters with Philippe

³ See Orgad, *The Cultural Defense of Nations: A Liberal Theory of Majority Rights* (Oxford, 2015),

⁴ See my “The Moral Dilemma of US Immigration Policy *Revisited*: Open Borders vs. Social Justice?” in *Debating Immigration*, 2nd edition, ed. by Carol Swain, (Cambridge University Press, 2018, originally published in 2007,); and “When and Why Should Liberal Democracies Restrict Immigration?” in Rogers M. Smith, ed., *Citizenship, Borders, and Human Needs* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 301-323.

⁵ Source: John Ellis, *The Fresno (CA) Bee* Oct 22, 2000; more broadly see: http://www.ontheissues.org/Ralph_Nader_Immigration.htm

Van Parijs, that the EU was dominated by financial interests and neo-liberal free market values, rather than social egalitarian liberalism.⁶

The issues here are empirically and morally complex, and we appear to confront some genuine dilemmas. Insufficient attention to the downsides of globalization has contributed to the upsurge of populism, but we also have moral duties and obligations beyond our borders, including to assist human beings in dire need. Globalized manufacturing has helped hundreds of millions rise out of the most dire poverty and remittances have contributed powerfully to development. Immigration, is not the most important factor in causing working class wage stagnation or decline in the US: several or many other factors seem more important. Where wages and working conditions are protected, moreover, the inflow of immigrants is much less likely to depress them.⁷

I hope, therefore, to highlight some concerns about immigration while not exaggerating its significance or ignoring alternative explanations. The fact is that while high immigration may cause disruptions to which we should attend, an immigrant threat narrative – featuring misinformation and racialized stereotypes – has proven to be a potent, destructive, and distracting force in politics. After surveying some competing assessments of the nature of our immigration problem, I end by considering the implications for policy reform.

The Very Progressive View: Nativism and Racism

Has high immigration, in the US and perhaps some other places, contributed (somewhat) to increased inequality by lowering wages among the less well educated? Has it reduced levels of social trust and also, partly as a consequence, welfare spending?

One approach to these sorts of questions that is prominent in the academy and much of progressive politics is to attribute concerns about immigration to prejudice, ignorance, nativism, and racism. These are all present in our politics and polity, however, I worry that the quick reversion to moralism can prevent our confronting hard questions.

⁶ Van Parijs, Rawls letters...

⁷ An important point whose formulation here I owe to Ben Hofmann.

In an important recent paper, Cristina Beltran argues that the immigration hysteria of the Republican and Tea Party Right in American politics is attributable in large part to the waning power and status of whiteness amidst America's increasing racial and ethnic diversity. I am sure that she is at least partly right. Citing texts and analyzing policy conflicts from across US history, she shows that political rhetoric concerning migration and the US southern border has often been marked by hysteria, violence, and melodrama. She invokes the label "*Herrenvolk* democracy" to describe this phenomenon: "an electorate supporting violent and authoritarian policies in an effort to feel stronger, freer, and more agentic."⁸

Beltran and others are surely right that immigrants have long been subject to vicious forms of scapegoating based on gross misrepresentation: Trump's now infamous line about rapists and murderers is a case in point: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. ... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."⁹ The very title of Ann Coulter's screed -- *Adios America!: The Left's Plan to Turn Our Country into a Third World Hell Hole* -- strongly suggests that Beltran is on to something. Coulter argues that immigrants are "a special interest group more powerful than Americans." Candidate Trump called this book "a great read!"¹⁰

Yet we should not automatically lump in with Coulter's morally abhorrent and absurd assertions, all expressions of concern about immigration. Beltran discusses the *Immigration Handbook* that then-Senator Jeff Sessions put together for Republicans in 2015, which observed that, "today's typical 18-34-year old earns \$2,000 less per year (adjusted for inflation) than ... [same] in 1980."¹¹ I am not sure that this statistic is

⁸ Cristina Beltran, "Invoking Legality in the Service of Domination: Anti-Immigrant Politics and the Pleasures of *Herrenvolk* Democracy," working paper presented at the American Studies Program, Princeton University, October 1, 2018; ms. p. 7. See also, David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (2007), who referred to 19th century "*Herrenvolk* republicanism." I appreciate her permission to cite and quote from this work in progress.

⁹ For the Trump quote:

https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2015/06/16/trump_mexico_not_sending_us_their_best_criminals_drug_dealers_and_rapists_are_crossing_border.html

¹⁰ She devotes six chapters in whole or part to immigrants and rape [?]

¹¹ Cite and check the specific source of this claim.

correct¹², though I believe it is true that the real wages of workers with low levels of education has declined. There are many factors that would have contributed to declining wages among the bottom 20-30% of American workers, including greater globalization of manufacturing, automation, the decline of American unions (fostered by public policy), and a fraying social safety net. More recently, workers were hit hard by the 2008 financial collapse and the (for a time) slow recovery. Economists debate the wage effects of immigration to the US, but it is possible that high immigration to the US, UK, and other countries, is another such factor, though less important than some or all of the other causes I have mentioned.¹³

Beltran also quotes from Steve Bannon's objectionable and nativist remarks about Mexican migrants. ("These are not Jeffersonian democrats... These are not people with thousands of years of democracy in their DNA coming up here."¹⁴) It is a little hard to know what Bannon intends to insinuate here.¹⁵ However, Beltran also quotes a 2016 radio discussion involving Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, the latter now a major policy advisor to President Trump, broadcast on Sirius XM's Breitbart News Daily. Bannon asserted that high rates of migration have "kinda overwhelmed the country," and he insists that the crux of the immigration problem to the US is too much legal immigration, not illegal immigration. Miller goes on to assert, correctly, that the size of the foreign-born population in the US more than quadrupled from 1970 to the present time.¹⁶ Of course, the total US population also increased during that time, so the proportion or percentage of foreign born did not quite triple from 1970 to 2014. That is still a sizeable increase in a relatively short amount of time. I say more about this below.

Beltran is right to condemn the exaggerations and slanderous misrepresentations of many on the right concerning people of Mexican and other Latinx ancestries. But she may also sweep too broadly. High rates of immigration can create stresses in labor

¹² This is not a good source, but: "According to U.S. Census Bureau data, the median earnings for full-time workers age 18 to 34 were \$35,845 in 1980. By 2000 the same cohort was earning \$37,355. For the period of 2009-2013, however, full-time workers between 18 and 34 had median earnings of just \$33,883." Need to check further, but see, <https://smartasset.com/retirement/the-average-salary-of-a-millennial>

¹³ See below.

¹⁴ Beltran, 76.

¹⁵ He could, on the most generous interpretation, be alluding to the fact that Latinos in the US, for various reasons, have lower participation rates than those in the same economic class born in the US. Putting it in terms of democratic "DNA" seems absurd.

¹⁶ Beltran, 76-7.

markets and elsewhere in society.¹⁷ I suspect that it is wrong and ill-serves progressivism to write off all concerns about immigration as nativism and racism.

Progressives rightly insist that justice and democracy require doing more to include and recognize the equal status and standing of *the other* in our politics: meaning immigrants, refugees, racial and sexual minorities, and all who are marginalized. I agree.

But in our highly politically polarized times I also want to add this: we need to do more to listen to the *ideological other*, lest our politics continue its descent toward civil war. For people on the left, that means inquiring with some sympathy, some open-mindedness, to expressions of working class resentment even when those expressions include suggestions of a racial or xenophobic inflection. Of course we must reject and condemn the race baiting and xenophobic rhetoric of some or many on the right. And we should also recognize and condemn the gross misrepresentations peddled by much of the right-wing media, and accepted by many of our fellow citizens. Yet, in spite of this, we also have a civic obligation to look for reasonable elements in the complaints of our political opponents. Political coalitions are diverse, and it would be wrong to reduce the concerns of Trump voters to the worst pieces of rhetoric vomited by the President.

Consider the account of Tea Party activists offered by Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. They chronicle the toxic misinformation and “racial and ethnic stereotypes” pushed by Fox News, Breitbart, Rush Limbaugh, and others: “Watch a day of Fox, and you will have the impression that illegal immigrants, criminals, and badly behaving people of color are overrunning America.”¹⁸ On that basis, they suggest that, “elite media impresarios who have encouraged and helped to shape Tea Party activism are more responsible than the grassroots members themselves for marrying activism to falsehoods and stoking destructive social stereotypes that pit older white Americans—the Fox viewership—against younger, less privileged, often minority fellow citizens.”¹⁹ Based on their extensive interviews, Skocpol and Williamson found that Tea Party activists themselves often defied simplistic stereotypes. “The stereotype of Tea Party activists as unreconstructed racists—as people who react to politics and policy only

¹⁷ I should emphasize that this would not justify blaming immigrants: the blame lies with American policymakers.

¹⁸ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford, 2016), 202

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 202-3.

through racial oppositions—simply does not jibe with,” people’s more complex life stories, such as the “very conservative white woman who opens her home to minority teenagers from troubled backgrounds,” even while insisting that, “U.S. citizenship status should be a central determinant of access to public benefits and government services.”²⁰ “Tea Partiers, like other Americans, sometimes show real sympathy for immigrants looking to work and get ahead, but they also frame their comments with stereotypical ethnic assumptions.”²¹ They quote a Tea Partier whose actual policy preferences are extremely similar to proposals advanced by President Barack Obama.²²

Katherine J. Cramer, in her important study of white working class resentment, interviews rural Wisconsinites who express admiration for the work ethic and family values of Mexican migrants to the US, while also voicing concern that large numbers of such migrants “keep wages down.”²³ Walsh notes that as young white adults have deserted distressed rural areas of the US in recent decades, Latino immigrants have arrived in substantial numbers, challenging “many communities’ long-term racial identity.” Cramer asks her readers to appreciate what she describes as the “complexity” of the place of race in “rural consciousness”:

If we boil rural consciousness down to race, we ignore the ways in which these perspectives comprise many things: identities with place, a sense of oneself as a person of a particular place in the class hierarchy, identities as people with particular values, and sometimes ideology. Resentment is operating because people perceive they are not getting their fair share. They are making sense of this injustice by resenting those they think are getting more than they deserve, and perceptions of who works hard and who is deserving are *intertwined* with race—neither separate from nor synonymous with a simple distinction of white versus other. ... [I]f we conclude that rural consciousness is just racism dressed up in social science jargon, it allows us to overlook the role of antigovernment attitudes and preferences for small government here. Tea Party messaging appeals to racism..., but it also resonates with many of the perceptions of inequality and alienation from government observed in the conversations presented in this book.²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., 70-1.

²¹ Ibid., 71.

²² Ibid., 226, note 48.

²³ Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), 74.

²⁴ Ibid., 87.

This is well said. While not denying that racism and racial insensitivity play important parts in opposition to high immigration, we should avoid a reductionism that ignores complexities, including genuine grievances insofar as they exist.

One final point on this score. Recent work on the American public's attitudes toward immigration and immigration policy suggests that while the most ethnocentric Americans "impose somewhat more of a penalty for immigrants from non-European countries," and especially Muslim countries, it appears that somewhat more negative attitudes toward immigrants from Mexico are accounted for by their association with unauthorized migration. Hainmuller and Hopkins furnish evidence suggesting that, "Conditional on information about prior trips to the United States, there is no penalty [in public attitudes] for immigrants from Mexico." As they say, "there is little evidence of a penalty specific to Mexicans. Mexican immigrants are treated in a manner indistinguishable from Polish or German immigrants and earn more support than Indian immigrants."²⁵ My point is not to excuse group-based stereotyping, but to suggest that in the immigration context it often involves attitudes and beliefs more complicated than simple prejudice.

The Return of High Immigration and Its Effects: Post 1970

The period since 1970 has seen, until recently, a rapid and sustained increase in immigration to the US. Whereas 4.7% of the population was foreign born in 1970, that figure reached 13.5% in 2016, when it seems to have crested, since declining slightly. The ethnic and racial makeup of immigration has also changed, with the percentage arriving from Europe and Canada falling sharply and the percentage from Latin America and Asia rising.²⁶

In 2016, the number of immigrants living in the U.S. reached a record high of 43.7 million out of a total U.S. population of (approx.) 320 million.²⁷ Between 2013 and 2014, the foreign-born population increased by 1 million, or 2.5 percent.

²⁵ Jens Hainmueller and Daniel J. Hopkins, "The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 59, No. 3, July 2015, pp. 529–548; at 545, 539.

²⁶ See Pew, "Modern Immigration."

²⁷ Pew and ACS: See <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/30/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>

Immigrants in the United States and their U.S.-born children now number approximately 80 million people, or 26 percent of the overall U.S. population. (80 million seems like a huge number, but that includes all the children with at least one foreign born parent.) A little more than half of the US population growth since 1965 has been due to immigration and it is estimated that the current population of the US would be 252 rather than 324 million were it not for immigration.²⁸

Today's immigrant share of the population is not quite as high as it was at its historic peak, in 1890, when it hit a record 14.8% of the population, with 9.2 million immigrants living in the U.S. That period also spurred an anti-immigration backlash.

US policy also favors some migrants based on employment qualifications and skills (14% of the total in 2010 – that category has been growing), others based on humanitarian grounds, such as refugees and asylum seekers (13% of the total in 2010),²⁹ and still others based on family-preference (66% of the approximately one million immigrants admitted in FY2013).³⁰ There are also shorter-term skills-based green card programs, including the H-1B visa program.

Distinct principles apply to refugees and asylum seekers. I will simply bracket that issue for now. (How many we are obliged or duty-bound to take depends partly on our specific responsibility for their plight and then also on more general humanitarian duties to do our fair share to relieve the distress of those in dire need out of our surfeit of resources. There are many grounds for arguing that the US should do far more than it does now in this arena, but I will leave this issue aside for now.)

²⁸ For a very helpful overview, see Ruth Ellen Wasem, *U.S. Immigration Policy on Permanent Admissions* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), 3, 7–8 <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/RL32235.pdf> See also Pew Research Center reports, including: “Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065: Chapter 5: U.S. Foreign-Born Population Trends,” September 28, 2015, accessed online, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/chapter-5-u-s-foreign-born-population-trends/>; and see also Chapter 2: “Immigration’s Impact on Past and Future U.S. Population Change,” <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/chapter-2-immigrations-impact-on-past-and-future-u-s-population-change/>.

²⁹ Dallas Fed Report, 18–19.

³⁰ Wasem, “U.S. Immigration Policy”; see also United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website: https://my.uscis.gov/helpcenter/search?q=sibling&tag=tag_search And see: <http://www.bipc.com/immigration-through-the-family-sponsored-preferences> For the 2013 figure, see U.S. William A. Kandel, “Family-Based Immigration Policy,” Congressional Research Service, November 19, 2014 at <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/library/P9368.pdf>

US immigration policy underwent major changes in 1965 through amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act. Before this, owing to the major prior immigration reforms passed in 1924, immigration had been based on national origins quotas designed to maintain the ethnic composition of the country that prevailed in the 1880's. The period from the mid 20's to the late 60's was a period of low, and mainly European immigration (especially in the wake of World War II).³¹

The 1965 reforms emphasized family reunification. So, as noted, about two-thirds of those granted permanent residency (green cards) since then have had their acceptance based on family reunification preferences, which include the spouses, children, parents, and siblings of migrants, including the parents and adult siblings of adult migrants. Once admitted, migrant's spouses and children, their spouse's parents, spouse's siblings, etc., also get preferred access.

No other country in the world has such extensive extended family-based preferences. Calling this "chain migration," as the Trump administration does, is not unfair descriptively, although "family reunification" is equally appropriate.³² There are many reasonable rationales for family-based preferences: for example, family members provide the new migrants with social supports, job contacts and references, and other forms of assistance. There are also humanitarian reasons to facilitate families living together, particularly among working class families and new immigrants in a nation that provides relatively few welfare supports. These extended family preferences may or may not be justified overall on policy or humanitarian grounds, but no one has argued that justice requires the implementation of this selection mechanism rather than others. Family preferences seem reasonably eligible for review and reconsideration.

The 1965 reforms also ended the guest worker "Bracero" program with Mexico, which had allowed in hundreds of thousands of seasonal workers during the middle decades of the 20th century. These workers were an integral part of US agricultural production, especially with the labor shortage during World War II, and constituted a seasonal labor flow in and out of the US. After 1965 that flow did not end but became

³¹ It has been pointed out that these decades seem also to have been marked by relatively high levels of social trust and equality; see Putnam and Piketty (?). The federal government's response to the Great Depression and WWII no doubt contributed very importantly.

³² It has taken on a pejorative connotation, see: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/26/us/politics/the-facts-behind-the-weaponized-phrase-chain-migration.html>

undocumented. By the early 1980's there were two to three million undocumented workers in the US at a given time. That circular flow was disrupted by a tightening of border restrictions in the late 1980's and early 90's, and so many of the undocumented remained in the US, driving up the undocumented population to a high of over 12 million by 2006, before falling to its current post-recession level of around 11 million.³³

The US is a high immigration country by global standards, and our immigrant pool is diverse. The main story of the last half-century has been high and rising immigration from Mexico and Latin America, though that has now dwindled considerably and the US is receiving a greater number of migrants from Asia.

The massive changes in migration patterns that the 1965 reforms helped bring about appear to have been unintended, both with respect to the shift away from European migration and the substantial increase in numbers.³⁴

US Immigration's Impact on Wages and the Working Class

I want to focus next on a series of scholarly claims concerning the distributive economic impact of migration to the US. I set out these issues elsewhere over a decade ago³⁵, and continue to think that they represent genuine concerns, however, the empirical evidence is now far more voluminous, fine-grained, and equivocal.

There seems no doubt that immigration has had a net positive effect on the US overall. Yet, as mentioned earlier, there are also some grounds for thinking that the benefits of immigration have been shared unevenly and also that there have been some losers among working class Americans. As compared with some other Western countries, especially Canada, the economic profile of immigration to the US has been distinctive and may in some ways have contributed to rising inequality. The US shares a very long border with Mexico, and we are also proximate to poor Caribbean and Latin

³³ A high proportion of these undocumented people are from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. My colleague Douglas Massey and his co-authors have done much to describe and analyze the perversity of efforts to "militarize" the US-Mexico border; more on this below.

³⁴ See Orgad, *Cultural Defense*, 58-9.

³⁵ The next few paragraphs draw on my essay, originally published in 2007, and only marginally updated as, "The Moral Dilemma of US Immigration Policy *Revisited*: Open Borders vs. Social Justice?" in *Debating Immigration*, 2nd edition, revised and expanded, ed. by Carol Swain, (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

American countries to our south. We need to consider how geography and policy interact to produce distinct outcomes.

There are four broad arguments to be considered: two involve labor markets, a third concerns the median voter, and finally diversity and social trust or “redistributive solidarity.”

The first hotly contested argument concerns “wage suppression” among low-skilled workers. High immigration to the US since 1970 disproportionately increased the pool of low-skilled workers at the lower rungs of the economic ladder, and some economists argue that this depressed the wages of low skilled workers. George Borjas, an economist at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, has argued this for decades; his work now influences the Trump administration.³⁶ Whereas in 1960, the average immigrant man living in the US earned four percent more than the average native-born American, by 1998 the same figure was 23 percent less. Borjas has argued that nearly half of the widening wage gap between high school dropouts and others may be due to the increase in the low skilled labor pool caused by immigration.³⁷

On this account, while most Americans have benefited from immigration, the least skilled native workers have seen their wages stagnate or decline due partly to the influx of low-skilled workers. All Americans have benefited from cheaper fruits, vegetables, and the many other products and services that immigrants (including undocumented workers) help produce.³⁸ Wealthier Americans have benefited from increased access to cheap labor to perform service work – as nannies, gardeners, etc. By decreasing the cost of childcare and housekeeping, immigration has helped highly educated women participate in the labor force.³⁹ But many low skilled American

³⁶ Cite New York Times article.

³⁷ George J. Borjas, *Heaven’s Door*; and, “The U.S. Takes the Wrong Immigrants,” *The Wall Street Journal* (April 5, 1990), A18; the quote continues, “75% of legal immigrants in 1987 were granted entry because they were related to an American citizen or resident, while only 4% were admitted because they possessed useful skills.” See also Dallas Fed Report, 10. See also George Borjas, “The Labor Demand Curve is Downward Sloping: Reexamining the Impact of Immigration on the Labor Market,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118.4 (November 2003), 1335–1374, 1336. According to the current data at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 8.6% of the American labor force has less than a high school diploma and 24% have only a high school diploma or the equivalent.

³⁸ See Jorge Durand, Nolan J. Malone, and Douglas S. Massey, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage, 2003), 150–151; conceding the wage effects discussed earlier, see 154.

³⁹ Cortés and Tessada (2011), and see Dallas Fed report

workers, including many native-born African American and Hispanic workers, compete directly with low-skilled immigrants.⁴⁰ Half of all workers with less than a high school degree are foreign born.⁴¹

If there is an immigration wage effect, how much is it? A lot or only a little? Labor economists such as David Card, Giovanni Peri, and others, argue that Borjas exaggerates the negative distributive effects: low-skilled foreign workers are not perfect substitutes for native workers, partly due to differences in language skills. Card argues that “immigration exerts a modestly positive effect on the labor market outcomes of most natives,” but not all, and not the least well-educated cohort.⁴² Ottovanni and Peri report as “robust” their finding that, “once imperfect substitutability between natives and immigrants is allowed for, over the period 1990-2006 immigration to the United States had at most a modest negative long-run effect on the real wages of the least educated natives. This effect is between -2.1% and +1.7.”⁴³ A December 2015 Bank of England report finds that, “the immigrant to

⁴⁰ Borjas, *Heaven's Door*, 11, and 22–38, 82–86, 103–104. And see Borjas, “The Labor Demand Curve.”

⁴¹ Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, Research Department, Working Paper 1306, September 2013: “Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market,” by Pia M. Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny. And, “Large-scale unauthorized immigration has fueled growth of the low-skill labor force, which has had modest adverse fiscal and labor market effects on taxpayers and U.S.-born workers. High-skilled immigration has been beneficial in most every way, fueling innovation and spurring entrepreneurship in the high tech sector. Highly skilled immigrants have had a positive fiscal impact, contributing more in tax payments than they use in public services,” Abstract.

A major point of contention is whether these workers constitute a distinct segment of the labor market; David Card argues that they do not.

⁴² See David Card, “How Immigration Effects US Cities,” Center for Research and Analysis of Migration, Discussion Paper, November 2007, Department of Economics, University College, London, available at http://www.econ.ucl.ac.uk/cream/pages/CDP/CDP_11_07.pdf And see, David Card and Giovanni Peri, “Immigration Economics: A Review,” April 2016, at: <http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/card-peri-jel-april-6-2016.pdf>. Another recent report arguing for small labor market effects, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2016), doi: 10.17226/23550. However, see also Steven A. Camarota and Karen Zeigler, “Who Got the Jobs?: Two-Thirds of Long-Term Employment Gains Have Gone to Immigrants, 2000–2017,” in Swain, *Debating Immigration*, 61-85.

⁴³ Gianmarco I. P. Ottaviano and Giovanni Peri “Rethinking the Effect of Immigration on Wages,” *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (February 2012), pp.152-197, at 191. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41426727> An even more recent survey of the conflicting findings of labor economists emphasizes the importance of immigrant “downgrading,” that is, working “in jobs below their observed education and experience level,” “in the presence of downgrading, immigrants and natives may appear to be imperfect substitutes within skill cells even though they are not. As such, downgrading will cause us to understate the wage losses of native workers,” see, Christian Dustmann, Uta Schönberg and Jan Stuhler, “The Impact of Immigration: Why Do Studies Reach Such Different Results?” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Fall 2016), pp. 31-56; 52-3. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44028257>

native ratio has a small negative impact on average British wages..... Our results also reveal that the biggest impact of immigration on wages is within the semi/unskilled services occupational group.”⁴⁴

Notably, I have not seen anyone who argues that patterns of migration to the US since 1970 have been *especially good* for the bottom 20% or 30% of American workers over the last half century. The debate seems to be about the existence and magnitude of the downward impact, and the general consensus seems to be that it has been small but maybe significant.

I have already mentioned the Canadian comparison, which strikes me as instructive (and possibly understudied). While there are many differences between Canada and the US, distinctive immigration policies may be among the things that help enable Canada to support both multiculturalism and a relatively generous welfare state (as compared with the US). Since 1969 Canada has emphasized skills: immigration tends to increase the proportion of people with high skills and education, lowering wages at the top and raising wages at the bottom. Richer immigrants pay more in taxes and consume fewer social services, making it easier for Canadians to support welfare state spending and redistribution: education, health care, poor relief, jobs training for the unemployed, etc. Canada’s migration policy may make it easier to support multicultural policies generally.⁴⁵

Note one other point: I believe the baseline for the forgoing comparisons concerning the wage impact of immigration is *zero immigration*. That is, the studies seem to be looking at the incremental differences made by actual immigration as compared with a counterfactual condition of no immigration. But suppose we consider a different counterfactual? Suppose that the US had, in 1960’s, adopted the *most favorable immigration policies* for working class Americans: how much worse off are the bottom

⁴⁴ This report sorts workers by occupational groups rather than education levels, and argue that this is superior, see Stephen Nickell and Jumana Saleheen, Bank of England Staff Working Paper No. 574, “The impact of immigration on occupational wages: evidence from Britain,” December 2015. See: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/working-paper/2015/the-impact-of-immigration-on-occupational-wages-evidence-from-britain.pdf?la=en&hash=16F94BC8B55F06967E1F36249E90ECE9B597BA9C>

⁴⁵ I do not have evidence related to the specific comparison, but much of the work cited here speaks to it indirectly. I have emphasized the role of skills, but race also likely matters: nearly 55% of Canada’s immigrants in 2017 came from Asia and Pacific countries. Many Americans harbor negative racial and ethnic stereotypes concerning Latinos, but not people from Asia; the same may be true in Canada.

20% of Americans now as compared with decades under the immigration policies that would have been *most favorable* from their point of view: Canada's skills based immigration policies, for example? I cannot say, but the gap would certainly be greater.

The "wage suppression" argument is highly controversial. There are other ways in which high immigration may lower wages and work conditions among working class Americans.

John Skrentny, a well-respected sociologist at UC San Diego, agrees with Borjas's critics, but describes another pathway by which many low-skilled native workers may be disadvantaged: by racial and ethnic stereotyping among employers of low-wage workers on construction sites, farms, chicken processing plants, and elsewhere. Employers engage in a pernicious stereotyping in which they see white and African American workers as less reliable and more apt to complain about harsh work conditions, while in contrast, they see Asian and Hispanic workers, especially immigrant workers and most especially *undocumented workers*, as more willing to work harder, longer, and more reliably under unpleasant conditions. They are willing, frankly, to be exploited. He bases this argument on extensive local interviewing. This stereotyping, he argues, has a substantial negative impact in many localities on the wages and the quality of the work conditions available to many low-skilled American workers.⁴⁶

A reasonable response to these two labor market arguments is: if immigration makes the citizens better off in aggregate but the distributive impact is bad for wages at the bottom, use political institutions to redistribute the surplus downward. We could in that way make everyone better off or, even, endeavor to do the best we can for the least well off. Why can't we just redistribute the aggregate immigration surplus?

In the postwar decades IR scholars developed a strategy similar to this, for managing the gains from globalized economic activity. J.G. Ruggie coined the phrase

⁴⁶ See John Skrentny, "Race, Immigration and Civil Rights Law in the Low-Skilled Workplace," in Swain, *Debating Immigration*, 2nd, 21-38.

“embedded liberalism”⁴⁷ to describe the strategy: governments and multilateral organizations would facilitate the “embedding” of global markets in domestic institutions that would reap the benefits of global trade while securing social welfare and support for wages and employment at the domestic level.

Part of the problem here is that high levels of immigration may affect citizens’ willingness to support redistributive welfare policies. Two arguments on this score are worth highlighting.

One is the “median voter” argument developed by McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal. Immigration patterns to US means that an increasing portion of those who benefit from social services are non-voters, as a consequence, the wages of the median voter rise relative to the population as a whole. The consequence, argue these scholars (among the leading political scientists in the US), is that median swing voters are less likely to vote for candidates who support social welfare spending and redistribution to the poor. High rates of immigration, on this view, help explain why America has experienced sharply rising economic inequality since 1980 without increased political pressure for redistribution.⁴⁸

I want to consider one final argument suggesting ill effects of high immigration for social welfare generally, including support for redistribution. Feelings of solidarity and mutual identification that help support social justice may be undermined, at least in the short to medium term, by the increased racial and ethnic heterogeneity associated with immigration.⁴⁹ In a much debated essay published in 2007, Robert Putnam provided

⁴⁷ John Gerard Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order,” *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2, *International Regimes* (Spring, 1982), pp. 379-415.

⁴⁸ Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches, Walras-Pareto Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2nd edition 2016), [Chapter 4](#); esp. p. 137. They note that, “From 1972 to 2000, the median family income of non-citizens fell from 82% of the median income of voters to 65% while the fraction of the population that is non-citizen rose from 2.6% to 7.7%” And in addition, a “large segment of the truly poor does not have the right to vote. Whereas in 2010, noncitizens were 9.2 percent of the general population,” they were 13% of families with incomes below \$7,500 per year.” Piketty argues that because a substantial number of Americans in the bottom half have roots in much poorer countries abroad and they are on an upward trajectory, inequality in the US has less salience for them, see *Capital* 538.

⁴⁹ As David Miller puts it, “A shared identity carries with it a shared loyalty, and this increases confidence that others will reciprocate one’s own cooperative behavior,” *On Nationality* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 92. Michael Walzer argues that the provision of social goods depends on shared social meanings,

an overview of different bodies of evidence suggesting that, “in ethnically diverse neighborhoods residents of all races tend to ‘hunker down.’ Trust (even of one’s own race) is lower, altruism and community cooperation rarer, friends fewer.”⁵⁰ The fact that immigrant groups typically have higher fertility rates than natives amplifies the effect. Putnam argued that immigration-induced increases in ethnic and racial diversity can reduce social trust, and others extended the claim to argue that this can also undermine social solidarity and support for the provision of public goods, including programs aimed at helping the poor.⁵¹

In the same year that Putnam’s essay appeared, Canadian political scientists Stuart Soroka, Keith Banting, and Richard Johnston provided their own survey of the empirical evidence, arguing that, “International migration does seem to matter for the size of the welfare state. Although no welfare state has actually shrunk in the face of accelerating international movement of people, its rate of growth is smaller the more open a society is to immigration.” They further speculated that, “The typical industrial society might spend 16 or 17 percent more than it does now on social services if it kept its foreign-born percentage where it was in 1970.”⁵²

These findings are highly controversial and contested. This *diversity-based argument* has received wide attention, much of it highly critical. While some subsequent research supports the Putnam thesis or a variant on it, especially as applied to the US, a great deal *qualifies* that thesis, and much challenges it fundamentally.

which in turn depend upon the enforcement of political boundaries, *Spheres of Justice*, Chapter 2, “On Membership.”

⁵⁰ Robert D. Putnam, “E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture,” *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 30.2 (June 2007), 137–174, 13.

⁵¹ A. Alesina, E. La Ferrara, “Who Trusts Others?” *Journal of Public Economics* 85 (2002) 207–234, finding that homogeneous places tend to be more trusting; Alberto Alesina, Reza Baquir and William Easterley, “Public Goods and Ethnic Divisions,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114. 4 (November 1999), 1243–84; see also, R. La Porta, F. Lopez-de-Silanes, A. Shleifer, and R. Vishny, “The Quality of Government,” *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 15.1 (1999), 222-279; Stephen Knack and Philip Keefer, “Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112.4 (1997), 1251–1288; William Easterly and Ross Levine, “Africa’s Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112.4 (1997), 1203–1250; Francis Fukuyama, “Social Capital and the Global Economy,” *Foreign Affairs* 74.5 (1995), 89-103.

⁵² Stuart Soroka, Keith Banting, and Richard Johnston, “Immigration and Redistribution in a Global Era,” in Pranab Bardhan, Samuel Bowles, and Michael Wallerstein, eds. *Globalization and Egalitarian Redistribution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 278. Need to be careful here: they don’t rely on Putnam’s “hunkering down” thesis. Distinguish more clearly?

Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka present and summarize some of this work in their edited collection, *The Strains of Commitment: The Political Sources of Solidarity in Diverse Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). What do we learn? “[T]hat solidarity matters to building and sustaining just societies, that an inclusive solidarity is potentially fragile in the face of diversity, and that the tension between diversity and solidarity is mediated by the larger political context in which it unfolds.”⁵³ There is, in other words, nothing inevitable about diversity’s negative impact on solidarity and social provision: the effects are mediated and shaped by political culture, policy structures, and the framing of the issue by political and media elites. The size and composition of the immigrant pool also, obviously, matters. All of these factors vary across national contexts and within them.

Conceptions of nationality seem to matter, but in different directions. A high level of national pride is, in the US, associated with lower support for redistribution. In Quebec, collective pride is associated with higher levels of support for redistribution, but there is no effect in the rest of Canada.⁵⁴

Policy structures and contexts also matter, including the structure of welfare programs. “Means tested” welfare programs target benefits at the needy more efficiently, but they tend to stigmatize recipients as compared with systems of universal provision that are also redistributive (such as Social Security in the US). The US and the UK tend to rely on means tested redistributive programs to a greater degree than countries with stronger commitments to social democracy, such as Denmark and Sweden. As Peter A. Hall puts it, “Program design can ... reinforce or erode worldviews that are central to redistributive solidarity. ... [S]ocial programs contribute to the drawing of social

⁵³ Banting and Kymlicka, *Strains*, 32. Again, I need to be careful here: the preponderance of subsequent research may come out against Putnam, or at least in favor of crucial qualifications. Rothstein gives an overview in his article in the Kymlicka and Banting book (316). The 2007 Putnam paper only comes up three times in that volume: Miller briefly mentions it, but refers mainly to his earlier work. Rothstein gives the summary. Borevi isn’t interested in the validity of the thesis. This is not to say that there isn’t an interesting trade-off to be weighed, just that social trust (which is a much narrower concept than, say, solidarity) might not be the right lens. Thanks to Ben Hofmann for discussion.

⁵⁴ Richard Johnston, Matthew Wright, Stuart Soroka, and Jack Citrin, “Diversity and Solidarity: New Evidence from Canada and the US,” in Banting and Kymlicka, 152-76, 164. There are, no doubt, variations in the US as well, but these are not discussed here.

boundaries.”⁵⁵ As others observe, “Canada achieved universality in its version of Medicare where the US got stalled with a scheme confined mainly to retired Social Security beneficiaries.”⁵⁶

Other context-specific factors make a difference by shaping the distribution of political power. An important feature of class politics in the US is the comparative weakness of organized labor as compared with other advanced democracies. Labor unions are important to the power of the social democratic left. (In the US context, I also note that, historically, the power of private sector labor unions was often associated with immigration restrictionism, though much less so in recent decades.⁵⁷)

Perhaps most importantly, elite rhetoric matters: “negatively toned” survey questions about immigrants’ access to welfare benefits elicit reduced support for welfare redistribution everywhere, especially in the US is greater.⁵⁸ We return to this below.

Indeed, much research now suggests that diversity as such is not the main issue. Americans’ concern about immigration typically focuses on Latinos, but attitudes can be far more hostile to Muslims, and *not at all hostile* to Asians: insofar as this is true, labeling the issue as “diversity” is obviously incorrect.⁵⁹

Another very important qualification of the Putnam thesis is this: Abascal and Baldassarri agree with Putnam that “ethnic diversity predicts lower levels of trust and cooperation,” but argue that his findings can be explained largely as the result of majority white animus. Putnam’s findings, they argue, do not generalize across ethnic and racial groups. *Minorities* simply have lower levels of trust to begin with, so, diverse areas, in which minorities are over-represented, display lower levels of trust for that reason.⁶⁰ Diversity *lowers only white people’s* social trust in one another and in newcomers. “Our

⁵⁵ Hall, “The Political Sources of Social Solidarity,” in Banting and Kymlicka, 201-32, at 207, and the research summarized there.

⁵⁶ Johnston, et al., “Diversity and Solidarity,” 170.

⁵⁷ See Peter Skerry, who discusses briefly Caesar Chavez and his United Farmworkers, “Opposing immigration wasn’t always racist,” bostonglobe.com/ideas/2017/04/15/opposing-immigration-wasn-alwaysracist/ZToPxnulS41s95cP53PdHM/story.html

⁵⁸ Johnston, et al., “Diversity and Solidarity,” 169. Other studies also suggest that the US is exceptional in displaying clearer negative effects, van der Meer et al., 472.

⁵⁹ See van der Meer, 463, Ybarra, et al., 328.

⁶⁰ Maria Abascal and Delia Baldassarri, “Love Thy Neighbor? Ethnoracial Diversity and Trust Reexamined,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 121 No. (November 2015): 722–82; “This relationship, however, disappears, once we control for ethnoracial differences between respondents and their communities, including individual race/ethnicity, citizenship status, and the concentration of whites and US citizens in tracts,” 740.

findings indicate that *only whites* report lower levels of trust when they live among out-group members."⁶¹ [my emphasis] So the Putnam these is right, but only as applied to the white majority.

In a way, it is not surprising that members of the majority ethnic or racial group would tend to have a greater sense of ownership or belonging, and confidence in others, that could be undermined by increases in neighborhood diversity, especially when the media environment (or important parts of it) advance a narrative that warns of uncontrolled immigration, and especially when people are feeling economically vulnerable, as many have done in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.⁶² Indeed, other scholars emphasize that reduced solidarity is fostered by high levels of inequality, which has certainly risen in the US in recent decades.⁶³

Other studies (and analyses of the many dozens of studies that Putnam has provoked) find both that his findings seem to hold up less well in Europe, and that diversity-induced decreases in trust or solidarity can be overcome or avoided by cross group contact, and the presence of multicultural policies.⁶⁴ While van der Meer et al., do find that “people in ethnically heterogeneous environments are less likely to trust their neighbors or to have contact with them,” this “does not spill over to generalized trust,” or to many “other forms of prosocial behavior and attitudes,” including informal helping and volunteer work.⁶⁵ Moreover, there are some studies that find that “heterogeneity stimulates interethnic cohesion,” partly by providing greater opportunity for “contact” across ethnic group lines: and contact “trump[s] threat and anomie” effects.⁶⁶

Overall, Ybarra et al., argue that “although anti-immigrant anxieties are driven in part by economic insecurity, they are also impacted by the presence of a large or growing proportion of racialized immigrants,” especially ones perceived to be a drain on public

⁶¹Abascal and Baldassarri, 723.

⁶² I think it is Hopkins who finds that increasingly negative attitudes occur when increased diversity is combined with elite threat narratives, check.

⁶³ Cites

⁶⁴ Provide cites.

⁶⁵ Tom van der Meer¹ and Jochem Tolsma, “Ethnic Diversity and Its Effects on Social Cohesion,” *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 2014. 40:459–78; 474.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 469, 471; and see also Sturgis et al, 79.

resources, such as “welfare or the school system.”⁶⁷ Drawing on this combination of factors to explain hostilities toward immigrants – high inequality coupled with other economic stressors such as those caused by the 2008 financial downturn, and stereotyped perceptions of immigrants as “freeloaders,” combined with racialized economic and cultural anxieties, seems a plausible and potent combination, especially when those perceptions, stereotypes, and anxieties are enflamed by a steady stream of sensational media accounts.

To summarize, immigration-induced increases in ethnic and racial diversity would seem to have few or *no necessary effects*, rather, particular kinds of increases in immigrant populations interact with a host of contextual factors – economic conditions, institutional and policy structures, history and culture, and elite framing – to produce consequences for what Kymlicka and Banting call “redistributive solidarity.” And these consequences may often vary a great deal within states. In the American case, longstanding prejudice against Latinos and newer fears of Muslims, the structure and relative fragility of redistributive programs, our troubled history with race, weak labor unions, and once again, the increased willingness of conservative elites in politics and the media to exploit fears of immigrants seems to matter.⁶⁸

Donald Trump is hardly the first American politician to exploit immigration fears. In the 1990’s Patrick Buchanan advocated “a triple fence, heavily policed, to keep Mexicans out of the US.”⁶⁹ In 2011 he charged that, “Mexico is moving north. Ethnically, linguistically, and culturally, the verdict of 1848 is being overturned. Will this Mexican nation within a nation advance the goals of the Constitution? Or has our passivity in the face of this invasion imperilled our union?”⁷⁰ He claimed, in 2007 that, “California is becoming the Third World state of Mexifornia,” and, most absurdly, that

⁶⁷ Vickie D. Ybarra, Lisa M. Sanchez, and Gabriel R. Sanchez, “Anti-immigrant Anxieties in State Policy: The Great Recession and Punitive Immigration Policy in the American States, 2005–2012,” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* (2016), Vol. 16(3) 313–339; 313, 318-9.

⁶⁸ There is much more to be said here. See also the work of Daniel Hopkins, arguing that elite rhetoric and local contextual factors interact; APSR. Here is one place where I need to do more work, as will be evident.

⁶⁹ “America’s most pressing foreign policy crisis,” Jeff Jacoby editorial, *Boston Globe*, Sep 20, 1999.

⁷⁰ Patrick J. Buchanan, *Suicide of a Superpower: Will American Survive to 2025?* (2011), 132-133.

this was partly because, “the *Asian* population [was] soaring 42% in a decade.”⁷¹ [my emphasis]

Buchanan was considered a dangerous character by Republican party elites – not unlike another candidate who emerged by surprise in 2016 -- and they succeeded in beating him back in 1992 and 1996. But anti-immigration voters have since flocked to that party and office holders who defy them are greatly imperilled in Republican primaries. Abrajano and Hajnal emphasize in their 2015 book, *White Backlash*, that the immigration threat narrative took on “increasingly clear partisan implications” in recent years: the “growing partisan divergence between leaders of the two parties” supplied many white Americans with “a powerful motivation to defect to the Republican Party.”⁷² And so a fractured Republican party has now been captured by an heir to Buchanan.

Recent research points to the importance of elite framing, media reports, and widespread misinformation, in sowing negative attitudes toward immigrants.⁷³ Alesina et al., report that, “much of the political debate about immigration takes place in a world of misinformation. Citizens and voters have distorted views about the number, the origin, and the characteristics of immigrants.” This is endogenous to politics: “Anti-immigration parties have an incentive to maintain and even foster the extent of misinformation... The more natives are misinformed, the more they become averse to immigrants and redistribution, and the more they may look for confirmation of their views in the media. As a result, the media has an incentive to offer information supporting these views. ... [I]mmigrants who commit crimes or who free-ride on the welfare system may receive more media coverage than non-immigrants doing the same.”⁷⁴

⁷¹ *State of Emergency*, 48-50. See the website:

http://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Pat_Buchanan_Immigration.htm; and see Jeff Greenfield, “Trump is Pat Buchanan With Better Timing,” *Politico*, October 2016;

https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/donald-trump-pat-buchanan-republican-america-first-nativist-214221?fb_comment_id=1271500892868572_1271804586171536#f1324224437b888

⁷² See Marisa Abrajano and Zoltan Hajnal, *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2015), introduction. Note also that while there is much talk of an emerging majority of non-white Americans, Republicans vote in higher percentages and far more consistently, see Andrew Hacker, “Hopeful Math,” *New York Review of Books*, Sept. 27, 2018, 71-3.

⁷³ Exposure to news about the European refugee crisis makes Europeans more hostile to migrants, see working paper by Hangartner, Dinas, and others, “Does Exposure to the Refugee Crisis Make Natives More Hostile?”

⁷⁴ Alberto Alesina, Armando Miano, and Stefanie Stantcheva, “Immigration and Redistribution,” NBER, Working Paper 24733; June 2018, Revised July 201; <http://www.nber.org/papers/w24733>Alesina et al 36.

Democratic Social Justice and the Cosmopolitan Rejoinder

The US went through a period of high immigration from roughly 1970 to 2010 and the ethnic composition of immigration during this period shifted dramatically from Europe to Mexico and Latin America. The skills levels of migrants also shifted significantly downward. In a way, it is not surprising that the US would have experienced various stresses associated with this, but these have been amplified by increasing inequality and general insecurity among America's working class, made worse by the serious economic downturn of 2008, a weak social safety net, and right wing politicians and media outlets eager to exploit immigration fears for political ends.

It remains the case that while America's historically high rates of immigration since 1970 seem to have been good for Americans in general, and also good for immigrants, and also sending countries (due to remittances, described below), there are several possible grounds for thinking that they may not been especially good for a portion of less skilled native workers: which is to say, for many working class Americans. If we have special obligations to our poorer fellow citizens that are sufficiently urgent and weighty, then US immigration policy – the high overall numbers and the principles of selection -- may be criticizable from the standpoint of *domestic distributive justice*.

Let us be clear, to tie this back to the theme of democratic backsliding: the principles of social justice are democratic principles. Democracy stands for collective self-government on the basis of the political equality of all citizens.⁷⁵ Political equality matters when judging the inputs and the outputs of the system. The *procedural* aspects of democracy are offended if particular groups are denied fair access to the means of political education and influence. Democratic principles are also offended if the *outputs* of the system are systematically skewed in a way that could not be justified to particular groups of citizens, such as working class Americans, regarded as free and equal.

Martin I. Gilens has argued that, with respect to American public policy as a whole, the bottom 40% of the American electorate does not influence policy unless its interests happen to coincide with the interests of the better off.⁷⁶ Gilens has argued with

⁷⁵ I follow here, broadly, Ronald Dworkin, Charles R. Beitz, and John Rawls.

⁷⁶ The recent work of Martin I. Gilens is especially instructive here.

Benjamin Page that the absence of influence among the non-affluent means that the United States is not a democracy: it is an oligarchy or plutocracy.

That is precisely the question with respect to immigration policy: Among American citizens, whose interests are served? The better off? Certainly. The majority. Very likely. The less well off? This is more doubtful.

Of course, the entire framing here may be skewed in a morally arbitrary way. Why should the interests of current American citizens, even those who are less well off in comparison to their very rich compatriots, take priority over the masses of even poorer human beings who happen to live just across the national border, or a boat ride away? Cosmopolitans will say that such an analysis is arbitrarily and morally unjustifiably biased against the needs of non-citizens, whether distant or near.

Space does not permit an extended discussion of this issue, which I have provided elsewhere. Suffice it to say here that I join with those who regard co-citizenship as a morally special relationship. It is a special relationship unlike that shared by family members or friends: our fellow citizens may be strangers to us. It is *sui generis*.

The basis of this special relationship is our shared citizenship in a legitimate political community, where government is answerable to the people, and popular political agency shapes the law of the community. The law of modern states shapes citizens prospects – their opportunities, options, developed capacities –comprehensively: from cradle to grave and beyond. With the extensive powers of the modern state come extensive justificatory burdens. The principles of social justice make good on those justificatory burdens: they provide a formula, admittedly abstract, for morally just governance. If our public policy conforms to those principles, no group will have a warranted complaint of unjust treatment, and each of us can say that our success is not the result of social relations that contribute unfairly to others impoverishment or failure.⁷⁷

What about those born outside of our national borders? If it is unjust for a child born in, say, Scarsdale, New York, in wealthy Westchester County, to enjoy vastly greater opportunities for development than a child born in parts of the Bronx where

⁷⁷ In our social conditions, the principles of social justice are bound to be regarded as critical principles that condemn wide swathes of public policy: people's life prospects are radically unequal, due to highly unfair distributions of place-based resources and opportunities, pertaining to health, education, jobs, and resources of all kinds. I have written about some of the specifics in "Property-Owning Plutocracy:

nearly 50% of population lives below the federal poverty level and the unemployment rate is over 20%, how can it be just for even greater discrepancies to exist between the US and Haiti or Nicaragua?

Space does not permit extended discussion but I argue with other social democrats and egalitarian liberals that what we owe to poor outsiders differs from what we owe to our co-citizens. We owe poor outsiders specific redress and restitution if we are responsible for their deprivation: these issues raise their own thorny questions concerning responsibility and the forms of acceptable recompense (the choice of means).⁷⁸ We also owe poorer countries fair trade arrangements that allow them to develop, and decent international institutional arrangements generally.

We also owe the destitute, even in the absence of any relationship with them, humanitarian assistance, insofar as it can be shown to be effective, to develop their own political and economic institutions. This is sometimes thought of as the principle of the Good Samaritan. In particular, we owe assistance to those whose most basic needs go unmet: all people have a basic human right to security and subsistence, and to minimally decent conditions of life.⁷⁹

The content of these outward looking policies of global political morality differs from the content of principles of domestic justice. These two also differ in their grounds. It is not the relative standing of poor citizens abroad that should draw our most urgent attention, but rather absolute deprivation.⁸⁰

Aside from the moral considerations that might help us rank various options, there are also downstream questions that combine moral and prudential considerations: what package of policies might be politically saleable in a given country? What package of policies represent acceptable compromises that also preserve, to the extent possible and reasonable, the political capital of progressive parties? (I cannot address all of these issues, but say something about policies below.)

⁷⁸ There are forms of both specific and diffuse responsibility. US responsibility to Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Iraqi, refugees and asylum seekers is specific for obvious reasons. US responsibility for climate-induced dislocations of populations is more diffuse (shared with many others). For an excellent discussion of related matters see David Miller, *National Responsibility and Global Justice*, discussion of the various forms of outcome responsibility.

⁷⁹ See Henry Shue.

⁸⁰ We should be admitting larger numbers of refugees, and/or providing greater resources for their resettlement or political and economic development in their home country.

Let me leave these issues aside for now, and proceed on this basis: we owe our fellow citizens distributive justice, but we owe outsiders a duty of assistance to become collectively decently self-governing (plus fair dealing).⁸¹ One issue that remains murky is the relative priority of these two aims. Do the dire needs of outsiders have moral priority with respect to the domestic demands of distributive justice? Or, is our own government duty bound to do justice domestically first and foremost?

Michael I. Blake argues that all countries must admit as immigrants people whose basic needs are not met and cannot (easily?) be met in their home country when and if they present themselves at the border seeking entry. He does not subject this principle to a fair share proviso, as many would. He argues simply that we cannot refuse them entry.

My own view is that this question of priorities is hard to answer in the abstract and may depend on the relative magnitudes on each side, such that a small decrement in domestic distributive justice might be made up for, morally speaking, if that is the price that must be paid for relieving the dire distress of significant numbers of outsiders. Tradeoffs are morally defensible.

What about our response to people whose basic needs are not met, and who knock on our doors seeking admission (as it were)? Blake may be right that we cannot simply turn them away. So let us say that we must do our fair share, such that if everyone did as much, in proportion to relative capacity, the problem would be fully addressed (assuming that this is not overly or very burdensome⁸²). Let us assume as well, that we have done our fair share, but others have not, so there are still people in dire need. Let us then add that doing a bit more would not be overly or very burdensome, given our resources and capacities. If all these conditions hold, then any country should also take up some of the slack, as it were, and do some more, up to the point of the burdens becoming substantial (an admittedly vague standard). At some point, I argue, we can say that we have done our part and it is enough, while allowing that it is tragic that needs go unmet.

⁸¹ See the account in John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, which I reframe and defend in, “What Self-Governing Peoples Owe to One Another: Universalism, Diversity, and *The Law of Peoples*,” *Fordham Law Review*, Special Symposium Issue on Rawls and the Law, 72 (2004): 1721–38.

⁸² The relevant standards here are vague.

If people in dire need continue to sail toward us from Africa in leaky dangerous boats must we still rescue them, even if it encourages more to come? Perhaps we must: I do not see how we can simply let people drown. But saving them and helping to resettle them somewhere is not the same thing as accepting them as future citizens.⁸³

I realize that these arguments are suggestive rather than conclusive. Part of my point is that when we consider and seek to treat fairly the grievances and resentments of working class voters we face many dilemmas with few simple and neat solutions. The interests of outsiders matter. So let us look next at the last thirty years from a wider economic and moral vantage point.

The Great Escape

Many if not most people by now have seen Branko Milanovic's "Elephant Curve." It tells an important story (see slide # x).

China and India enacted market reforms in the 1980's and 90's that allowed hundreds of millions of people to rise out of the most desperate forms of poverty. Accounts of the decline in the percentage of people living on less than \$1.90 a day (the revised global benchmark for dire poverty) are stunning. (See Slide XX) Other parts of East Asia are seeing similar trajectories (Vietnam for example) and there is considerable growth in Africa also.⁸⁴

The head of Milanovic's elephant curve represents one of the greatest economic and moral leaps in human history, and we mustn't forget it. However, and obviously, not everyone on the globe has benefitted, or at least not equally. The global elite – financial interests and elite professionals – have prospered wonderfully. But the decline of manufacturing jobs in Western countries has wrought serious dislocations.

Factory jobs have been lost or transformed not only by globalized trade but by automation. My understanding is that both of these factors matter considerably more

⁸³ What the Europeans have done, relatively effectively, is to erect strategic barriers in North Africa, Hungary, Greece, and elsewhere to try and stem the flow of migrants from Africa, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. This has included paying off the smugglers and turning them into coastal patrols. They are also helping to support resettlement camps in Africa and detention facilities in Greece and Turkey. PLEASE NOTE: I am now basing this on conversations with colleagues and need to investigate further.

⁸⁴ This is all indebted to Angus Deaton, *The Great Escape*.

than immigration in understanding the causes of the declining well-being of working class people.

Other factors too, unrelated to immigration, have contributed to undermining working class wellbeing and increasing people's sense of hopelessness. The sharp decline of private sector labor unions in the US, for example. Also changing family structures: in the US since the 1970s marriage has seen a resurgence among the well-educated, but marriage rates are now lowest among those with only a high school degree or high school dropouts. This part of the population tends also to have more traditional conceptions of gender roles in which the husband should be the breadwinner, but the decline of secure and well-paying factory jobs has undercut the economic foundations of traditional marriage. Out of wedlock births, single parenting, and family and relationship instability now all characterize the less well educated in the US. Mortality rates from drugs, alcohol, and suicide have all climbed steeply.⁸⁵ As Robert Putnam and Charles Murray have argued, these trends forebode even greater class differences in the future, since childhood cognitive development is also diverging along class lines.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, at the US-Mexico border, levels of net migration are now zero. In fact, after the recession of 2006, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans in the US returned home. Why? There has been substantial economic growth in Mexico, spurred by many factors, including high remittances. (See Graph # xx) Even more importantly, the birth rate in Mexico has plummeted, from nearly 7 children for every woman in her childbearing years to just over 2 in 2015, a rate very close to the US and Canada.⁸⁷ The period of mass migration from Mexico may well be over. On the other hand, migrant caravans of people from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and elsewhere – portrayed as hordes of hostile invaders by demagogues – are increasing. But the combined population of these Central American countries is ¼ that of Mexico.

Morally Defensible Policy Reforms?

Where does this leave us?

⁸⁵ See Deaton and Case.

⁸⁶ See especially Putnam, *Our Kids*; and also Murray, *Coming Apart*.

⁸⁷ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/smaller-wealthier-mexico-horizon>

Strangely enough, for all the heat and conflict around these issues, there have always been politically moderate and morally defensible immigration reform packages. Leading scholarly experts, such as Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton have sketched and defended such reforms, which resemble in some ways the bipartisan immigration reforms that various US Senators – including John McCain, Marco Rubio, Richard Durbin, and others – coalesced around in 2007 and again in 2013, before the reform effort was shot down by political extremists, especially on the right.

A reasonable reform package could include some combination of elements such as these, all of which ought to be regarded as at least potentially legitimate policy options:

- Reductions in the overall numbers of migrants as compared with the peak years, or even the average of years from 1970-2006, partly by curtailing the US’s extensive family preferences.
- Better enforcement of immigration laws, preferably by something like “E-Verify,” which would place the burden on employers to hire workers who are in the US legally.
- Reinstatement of a “guest worker” program that would facilitate the circulation of seasonal workers and enable the sending of remittances, with participation of home governments to try and insure worker rights. A two-year work visa renewable once.
- Amnesty and a path to citizenship for the vast majority of the 11 million undocumented residents of the US. Eighty percent of these people have been in the US more than five years, half for more than a decade. Many have children who are American citizens. Basic moral decency demands that we regularize their status. They may have had no “right” to come here in the first instance (strictly speaking) but as Jeb Bush once said, the vast majority came for the most honourable of reasons: out of love for their families.⁸⁸

In addition, Americans’ views on immigration are generally positive, and they support moderate reforms. 71 percent of Americans consider immigration a “good thing” for the United States according to a 2017 Gallup poll. As many “as 84 percent support a

⁸⁸ See also the Brookings-Duke report on immigration.

path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants if they meet certain requirements. A separate Gallup poll found that among Republicans, support for a path to citizenship (76 percent) was higher than support for a proposed border wall (62 percent).⁸⁹ And in 2013, the Democrat controlled Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill by 68-32, yet, unfortunately, the Republican controlled House refused to even bring it up for a vote.

That 2013 reform bill included increased border security, penalties for unauthorized migration, an emphasis on English language acquisition, and a shift toward skills-based immigration, as well as regularization of the status of most of the 11 million undocumented migrants resident in the US. Hainmuller and Hopkins provide strong evidence that these feature of immigration policy are strongly favored by the vast majority of Americans, Democrats and Republicans, especially skills based immigration and English language acquisition.⁹⁰ Interestingly, they find no evidence that immigration's impact on respondents' personally makes any difference: education and skills preferences for immigration are equally favored by highly educated and less well-educated Americans. The judgments that move people appear to relate to immigrants' perceived contributions to society, not individuals' personal prospects.⁹¹

Unfortunately, many in the US, particularly on the political right, would prefer to exploit the immigration issue for political purposes rather than address it constructively, but the time may yet come when the window for reform reopens. The majority of Americans would readily accept a package of moderate reforms framed constructively. Republican primary voters are, for now at least, a different story.

In the meantime, it would be good to make progress where we can. If it were possible to secure regularized status for a significant number of the undocumented by

⁸⁹ See <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0>

⁹⁰ See Hainmuller and Hopkins, 531.

⁹¹ The attitudes are sociotropic not self-interested, "Overall, hypotheses grounded in self-interest have fared poorly, meaning that there is little accumulated evidence that citizens primarily form attitudes about immigration based on its effects on their personal economic situation. This pattern has held in both North America and Western Europe, in both observational and experimental studies. It also sits well with the broader public-opinion literature emphasizing a limited role of self-interest in attitude formation." Instead "recent research shows that immigration-related attitudes are mostly driven by symbolic concerns about the nation as a whole. These concerns are most commonly thought to be cultural but are sometimes conceived of as economic," Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014, 227.

agreeing to a stupid border wall, so be it. More broadly, progressives should allow that countries have a right to control their borders.