

LIMEN

Journal of the International Network for Immigration Research

7–8 (2023/1–2)



mrⁱ

MIGRATION
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

LIMEN

Journal of the International Network
for Immigration Research
published by the Hungarian Migration Research Institute

7–8 (2023/1–2)



MIGRATION
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

LIMEN

Limen is a semiannual International Journal of the International Network for Immigration Research (INIR) published by the Hungarian Migration Research Institute. Articles published in the journal reflect the views of their authors and do not represent the official positions of INIR or the Migration Research Institute.



Editorial Board:

Tamás DEZSŐ, Dominika GYÖRGYI, Sára KMECZKÓ, Viktor MARSAL,
Balázs ORBÁN, Árpád PÁRDU CZ, Omar SAYFO, Meszár TÁRIK,
Márk VARGHA

International Advisory Board:

Maxime AYMAR (Observatoire de l'immigration et de la démographie),
Nicolas POUVREAU-MONTI (Observatoire de l'immigration et de la
démographie), Mark KRİKORIAN (CIS), Jim ROBB (Numbers USA),
Eric RUARK (Numbers USA), Nayla RUSH (CIS)

Publisher:

Tamás DEZSŐ (Director General, Migration Research Institute)

P. O. Box 155, H-1518 Budapest, Hungary
info@migraciokutato.hu

©Migration Research Institute

Frontispiece:

Warning sign near the US-Mexico border, Arizona. Photo: shutterstock.com

ISSN: 2732-0200

Table of Contents

Lectori Salutem!	4
Mark KRİKORIAN The End of Asylum	5
Jim ROBB America's Enormous Hispanic Population Is Shifting to the Right Politically with Vast Consequences for the United States	20
Eric A. RUARK Immigration, Population Growth, and the "Environment"	50
Nicolas POUVREAU-MONTI Integration and demographic challenges in France: an overview	72
Sára KMECZKÓ The Gateway or the Bastion? Tunisia's role in stemming the flow of Europe-bound migration	86
Róbert GÖNCZI The Instrumentalization of Migration in the Arctic Circle: The Re-emergence of the Northern Migration Route and its Significance in the Russian Hybrid Military Toolbox	102
Book recommendation by Sára KMECZKÓ Omar Sayfo – Viktor Marsai – Kristóf György Veres: <i>Whose Space Is It?</i> Parallel Societies and Urban Enclaves in Western Europe. MCC Press, Budapest 2024.	117
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	122

Lectori Salutem!

When we launched Limen as the journal of the Migration Research Institute (MRI) in 2020, our main goal was to increase the number of our English-language publications to support the internationalization of the institute. In the past four years, we met and collaborated with numerous leading scholars of immigration studies and its related disciplines. Their contributions not only increased the relevance and academic merit of Limen, but also helped us to build a network which can give a new impetus to our activities.

In November 2023, MRI and four other research centers established the International Network for Immigration Research (INIR). The members of INIR consider immigration a topic that should be assessed with a multifaceted approach that takes into account both the benefits and the challenges. The members of the network share the principle that host countries are sovereign nation states with the right to pursue and enforce their chosen immigration policies that reflect the perspectives of their societies. Instead of merely making normative declarations based on an ideologically driven approach dominated by a strong humanitarian agenda, member organizations address the political, social, economic, and security considerations of immigration in order to develop realistic, long-lasting and responsible policy on this crucial issue.

To further their aims, the members of INIR decided to form an international advisory board for Limen that will serve as a publishing platform for multidisciplinary research and scholarship on migration and its related phenomena. In this double issue, the experts of INIR are elaborating on topics that were raised at the first joint workshop held by the network in Budapest in 2023. The timely issues covered include a rethinking of the international asylum system, the instrumentalization of migration, the shifts in the political preferences of the Hispanic population of the United States, and the challenges posed by immigration and integration in France.

Budapest, 28. 06. 2024

Viktor MARSAI PhD
Executive Director
Migration Research Institute

The End of Asylum

Mark Krikorian

Abstract

The dramatic political, social, and technological changes since World War II have made the asylum regime established by the 1951 Refugee Convention unsustainable. Because asylum is seen as a “right”, it has become a challenge – arguably an existential challenge – to the sovereignty of developed nations. The measures proposed or taken so far have failed to address the fundamental contradiction between international asylum rules and modern conditions. The beginning of a solution, then, must be to withdraw from multilateral treaties that relate to asylum and for each nation to develop its own asylum policies based on its own interests.

Keywords: Asylum, refugees, borders, illegal immigration, United Nations

Introduction: asylum and sovereignty

While a handful of countries signed a refugee convention in 1933,¹ the current refugee (and asylum) regime was established in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.² It applied only to persons in Europe and only retrospectively, i.e., to those displaced by World War II and the subsequent Red Army subjugation of Eastern Europe. This framework was universalized in 1967 through the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which applied the Convention’s terms to the whole world and made them prospective – i.e., for all future claimants for refugee status.

There are two aspects of the refugee issue, differentiated by geography.³ The first category are refugees from abroad who are brought to a country by that country’s government for resettlement. This does not represent a challenge to national control

¹ LEAGUE OF NATIONS 1933.

² UNHCR 1951.

³ The terminology may vary slightly depending among countries; these are the labels in U.S. law, but the framework is similar everywhere.

over immigration since the selection and resettlement of refugees are affirmative decisions of the receiving state – sovereign acts. This may be deemed a good or bad policy, it may be executed well or badly, but it is up to the receiving state whether and how it will happen.

The other aspect is asylum, which is when an alien is already in the receiving country (usually illegally, but occasionally in some kind of temporary status), and then seeks refugee status as a means of avoiding deportation. This is the core border-control challenge, arguably an existential challenge, for the developed nations of the world.

Asylum represents a surrender of sovereignty, a pledge to permit foreigners to decide who will live in a country, as opposed to the citizens of that country. It reframes immigration as a *right*, rather than a *privilege* – a claim that an unauthorized foreigner has on the state he illegally broke into, which the ostensibly self-governing people of that nation are required to honor, regardless of any numerical limits in the nation’s immigration law.

The framers of the 1951 Refugee Convention appreciated this concern over sovereignty and sought to reassure potential signatories that “refugee” would be narrowly defined.

According to the Convention (and the Protocol), to be considered a refugee, one has to be out of one’s country of nationality and have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear of persecution “for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”.⁴

What is more, for purposes of asylum – i.e., for illegal aliens claiming refugee status – the convention has further strictures. Article 31, entitled “Refugees unlawfully in the country of refuge”, reads, in part:

The Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

The important caveats here are the requirement that illegal aliens claiming refugee status come “directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened” and that such illegal aliens “present themselves without delay to the authorities”.

⁴ UNHCR 1951, 3.

Asylum in recent history

In the first four decades of the post-WWII refugee regime, asylum's potential threat to national sovereignty and national security were seldom considered because asylum was a minor issue. After the initial large-scale movements of people in the immediate wake of the Soviet takeover of much of Central and Eastern Europe, only the flight of some 200,000 Hungarians after the 1956 uprising would fall under the category of asylum in Europe – a large movement of people, not authorized by receiving governments. Most other population movements in Europe were either organized labor migration or the arrival of co-ethnics, such as Greeks expelled in the wake of the 1955 pogroms in Constantinople or Pieds-Noirs fleeing Algeria for metropolitan France.

And in the United States asylum was even less of an issue. President Truman did not sign the 1951 Convention, due to concerns over its limitation on sovereignty, and the U.S. definition of a refugee was shaped largely by Cold War concerns. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948⁵ was mainly concerned with resettlement of people from Europe, but included a provision defining a “Displaced Person residing in the United States” as someone fearing persecution “on account of race, religion or political opinions”. But, crucially, it was limited to aliens lawfully in the country in some kind of non-immigrant (i.e. temporary) status, such as students. In current U.S. law, this is considered an “affirmative” asylum claim, as opposed to the much more common, and more problematic, “defensive” claim, which is offered by an illegal alien as a defense against deportation.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act⁶ further altered the definition of a refugee somewhat, but still with limited relevance to asylum. A refugee was again someone fleeing “on account of race, religion, or political opinion, from either a communist country or from “any country in the general area of the Middle East”. But this still applied almost entirely to people seeking to come here legally under this status.

The only real asylum crisis faced by the United States in this period was the large-scale illegal arrival of Cubans after the communist takeover of the island. Tens of thousands arrived illegally by boat, many of whom were placed in deportation proceedings, until 1962, when the government, for anti-communist reasons, simply paroled in Cuban illegal aliens rather than referring them to deportation

⁵ U.S. CONGRESS 1948.

⁶ U.S. CONGRESS 1965.

hearings. But these and subsequent actions were specific to Cuba due to its status as an outpost of the Soviet Empire, and did not inform broader immigration policies.

The United States signed on to the international refugee system when it signed the 1967 Protocol, which was ratified by the Senate in 1968. But the Protocol is not self-executing and so it was not until the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980 that the Convention refugee provisions were included in U.S. law.

To give a sense of how small an issue asylum was before the passage of the 1980 law, in 1979 the total number of asylum claims filed with the Immigration and Naturalization Service was fewer than 6,000.

Last year it was close to half a million.

A New World

In recent decades four developments have combined to fundamentally change the migration environment – hugely increasing the saliency of asylum policy and rendering the Convention’s and Protocol’s caveats and limits regarding asylum meaningless in practice.

First, the Cold War has ended. The cruelty and unworkability of communism meant millions wanted to move to the West, but it also meant that communist regimes made escape difficult. With few people able to escape, it was easy for the West to accept the handful who succeeded, confident in the knowledge that their open posture would yield diplomatic points but not result in any large number of arrivals.

Second, global population has grown significantly, with most of that growth coming in developing countries, where poverty, disorder, and misrule create powerful incentives to leave. In 1951, when the Refugee Convention was signed, there were about 2.5 billion people in the world, about 29 percent of them in Europe and North America.⁷ In 1980, when the United States accepted the international refugee regime, there were 4.4 billion people, about 22 percent of them in the West. In 2024, there are about 8.1 billion people, only 14 percent in the West.

So, since the current refugee and asylum rules were formulated, the globe’s population has more than tripled, while the share of that population in the

⁷ UN 2022.

primary destination countries for migrants has fallen by half. That math alone makes asylum a threat to the nations that prospective migrants seek to move to.

But the population math is not alone. The past 75 years have also seen amazing declines in the cost and ease of transportation and communications, making it dramatically easier to travel the world, allowing migrants to engage in “forum-shopping”, traveling long distances to claim asylum in prosperous countries rather than seeking safety in their own regions.

In 1950, a three-minute telephone call from Boston to London (requiring the assistance of an operator, and using a device plugged into the wall) cost about \$50 a minute in current dollars.⁸ The price now of calling on a mobile phone can be measured in pennies and is arguably free, depending on one’s plan or if one uses an application like WhatsApp or Viber.

Moving from one place to another is also much less expensive. In 1955, TWA offered a one-way flight from New York to Paris at an inflation-adjusted price of more than \$3,600.⁹ Today you can make the same trip on a bargain carrier for little more than \$200, and even airlines more comparable to the old TWA charge less than \$800 – a reduction of more than 75 percent.

So there are far more people with the desire and ability to get to the West and use asylum as a gambit for entry. But there is yet one more change in circumstances that makes asylum very different from the past. That is the post-1960s loss of cultural self-confidence among the elites of the developed world.

The leadership classes in Europe and North America have simply lost the will – even the inclination – to defend their nations’ sovereignty. That means “no” seldom means “no”, and most of those who manage to penetrate the borders of Western nations and make an asylum claim, no matter how preposterous, are permitted to stay. As the president of Finland said last year, “Deportation of migrants who do not meet the criteria for asylum has become impossible, so entering the border means you stay in that country if you want to”.¹⁰ Of course, it is not literally impossible, it is just that the leadership strata of receiving societies – not just governments but also business, academia, media, NGOs, etc. – choose not to do what is necessary.

⁸ CHADDOCK 1997.

⁹ STRUTNER 2014.

¹⁰ LEHTO 2023.

“No Upper Limit”

These changed conditions have turned asylum-seeking into a vehicle of mass illegal immigration, and have made it extremely difficult for developed nations to control who enters their countries.

The consequences of this are well-known; the 2015-16 migration crisis in Europe is perhaps most notorious. In September 2015 German Chancellor Angela Merkel allowed illegal aliens to come to Germany and claim asylum instead of making the asylum claim in the first EU country the aliens entered, as required by the Dublin Regulation – countries less desirable for illegal migrants, such as Greece or Italy. The result was the arrival of well over 1 million illegal entrants, ostensibly fleeing the Syrian civil war but in fact from all over the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.

A comment Merkel made at the time in a media interview distilled the asylum problem faced by the developed world. When asked how many refugees Germany could tolerate, she said, “The basic right to asylum for politically persecuted persons has no upper limit. This also applies to the refugees who come to us from the hell of a civil war”.¹¹

This is the logical end-point of the 1951 refugee/asylum regime, and why it can no longer be sustained in today’s changed circumstances.

But the 2015-16 crisis in Europe pales beside the ongoing crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. Previous U.S. administrations had struggled with the use of asylum as a means of illegal immigration, but administrative reforms¹² and legislative restrictions¹³ put in place in the mid-1990s helped rein in asylum abuse for a while.

A key part of the legislative changes was something called “expedited removal”¹⁴ for illegal aliens, which, as the name suggests, was intended to speed up deportation by permitting agents to order removal without sending the case to an immigration judge for a hearing. But an illegal alien could avoid this expeditious process if he expressed a credible fear of being returned, meaning he would be permitted

¹¹ BRÖCKER – QUADBECK 2015.

¹² MARTIN 2000.

¹³ KRİKORIAN 2007.

¹⁴ CADMAN 2019.

to apply for asylum. In any event, however, the law required detention until the alien's case was resolved one way or the other.

But then in 2009 the new Obama administration issued the “Morton Directive”,¹⁵ under which illegal aliens receiving positive “credible fear” determinations would be released into the country. That effectively reversed the gains made by the mid-1990s reforms, and kicked off the growth in asylum claims that was only briefly interrupted by President Trump's implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols (often known as Remain in Mexico, about which more below).

Under the Biden administration, the asylum crisis has ballooned beyond anything previously imagined. Jeh Johnson, who had been Secretary of Homeland Security under President Obama, said in 2019 that more than 1,000 apprehensions of illegal border-crossers in a day “overwhelms the system”.¹⁶ When he said that, the daily number was around 4,000, and his response was “I cannot begin to imagine what 4,000 a day looks like, so we are truly in a crisis.”

During Fiscal Year 2021, the average daily number of illegal border-crossers was more than 5,000; it grew to an average of more than 7,500 a day in FY 2022, more than 8,700 a day in FY 2023, and more than 9,500 a day in the first half of FY 2024 (October 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024).

The Biden administration has taken into custody and then released some 3.5 million illegal border-crossers since January of 2021, on the assumption that they would apply for asylum. Many never even expressed a fear of return, but such a fear has simply been imputed to them as a matter of policy. And many do apply; the number of “defensive” asylum claims (those made by illegal aliens in removal proceedings) tripled over four years to more than 465,000 in 2023, and the backlog of pending cases grew to more than 780,000 (see Figure 1 and Table 1 below).

In a very real sense, the goal of illegal immigrants is not so much to *receive* asylum, though that would be fine, but rather merely to *apply* for asylum, and then go about your new life secure in the knowledge your case may not be heard for years, and even if you are rejected, you are unlikely to be removed.

¹⁵ ARTHUR 2021.

¹⁶ ERNST 2019.

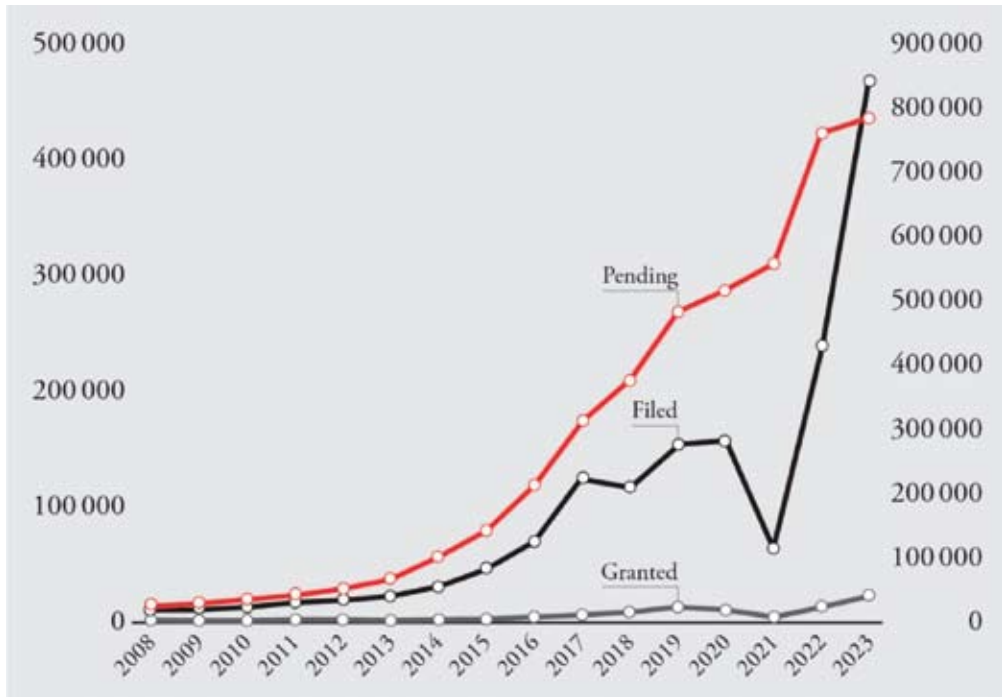


Figure 1. Defensive asylum applications. Source: Executive Office for Immigration Review 2023.

Fiscal year	Filed	Granted	Pending	Defensive Receipts: Defensive Grants Ratio
2008	13,171	2,674	26,403	4.93:1
2009	12,183	2,193	29,899	5.56:1
2010	12,758	2,091	35,497	6.10:1
2011	18,019	2,676	42,992	6.73:1
2012	19,997	2,737	52,148	7.31:1
2013	23,651	2,526	67,409	9.36:1
2014	31,560	2,680	103,134	11.78:1
2015	46,839	3,304	143,646	14.18:1
2016	70,554	4,803	213,798	14.69:1
2017	124,138	6,922	313,628	17.93:1
2018	117,276	9,056	376,627	12.95:1
2019	154,934	13,458	481,224	11.51:1
2020	158,208	10,866	515,830	14.56:1
2021	65,935	5,195	557,185	12.69:1
2022	236,547	15,295	758,639	15.47:1
2023	465,874	23,402	782,067	19.91:1

Table 1. Defensive asylum applications. Source: Executive Office for Immigration Review 2023.

Curbing asylum

There have been many efforts in developed countries to limit the use of asylum as a tool of illegal immigration. The Trump administration, for instance, instituted the Migrant Protection Protocols (Remain in Mexico) in early 2019, which required illegal border-crossers applying for asylum to be sent back across the border to await their hearings, thus eliminating the ability to use an asylum claim as a stratagem to obtain release into the U.S.

This yielded immediate results, tamping down the 2018 surge in illegal crossings that followed the end of the zero-tolerance policy (and the attendant family separations) at the border. But it remains, in the words of former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Christopher Landau, a “second-best approach”, because “it seems odd for people to cross third countries where they do not have those imminent threats of danger and then apply for asylum in their preferred country.”¹⁷

In addition, the Trump administration reached “safe third country” pacts (formally known as Asylum Cooperative Agreements) with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Those agreements would have required foreigners (of any nationality) who passed through one of those countries on their way to infiltrate the U.S.-Mexico border to be sent back to apply there.

Similar efforts to limit asylum within the existing 1951 framework have been made by other developed countries. Israel, for instance, reached agreements with Rwanda and Uganda to send illegal-alien asylum-seekers there to apply for asylum. From 2013 to 2019 Israel sent some 4,000 Eritrean and Sudanese illegal aliens.¹⁸

Israel’s program was voluntary, but Britain and Denmark reached similar agreements with Rwanda that envisioned mandatory removal to Rwanda. Denmark has paused its plan, but the UK version, after being tied up in litigation, was approved by Parliament in April 2024, and may begin soon.¹⁹

Italy also has reached an agreement that might be called “Remain in Albania”, wherein illegal aliens rescued at sea by Italian authorities would be sent to Italian-funded centers in Albania for asylum processing.

All these efforts were inspired by Australia’s “Pacific Solution”, which started in 2001. There were several iterations, but the point was that illegal aliens arriving

¹⁷ LANDAU – MARSAL – PÉNZVÁLTÓ – KRİKORIAN 2023.

¹⁸ WALSH 2022.

¹⁹ REUTERS 2024.

by sea would not be allowed to set foot in Australia, but rather would be sent to Australian detention facilities on the island nations of Papua New Guinea and Nauru (from which they could relocate to Cambodia²⁰, though few did).

But the shortcomings of trying to limit the harmful effects of asylum while still operating within the 1951 refugee regime are apparent from all these examples.

In the United States, the Biden administration suspended Remain in Mexico and canceled the safe-third-country agreements almost immediately upon taking office in 2021. Israel's supreme court suspended the Rwanda program in 2019.

Britain's agreement with Rwanda, despite its approval by Parliament, is sure to be challenged in court once it gets underway, with anti-borders groups claiming that it violates the UK's commitments under the Refugee Convention (as well as under the European Convention on Human Rights).

Administrative measures to limit the use of asylum for illegal immigration are always susceptible to change by subsequent administrations, and by courts. What are needed are legislative changes that will not be subject to judicial interference based on international agreements. In other words, the entire treaty structure of post-World War II asylum law needs to be dismantled.

This must start by withdrawal from the Refugee Convention and Protocol, but also from the Convention Against Torture, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – all of which prevent democratically elected governments of destination countries of illegal immigration from controlling their borders, but do nothing to change the behavior of non-Western countries.

Specifically, the *non-refoulement* requirements of such treaties are weapons wielded by trans-national NGOs and supra-national institutions against the sovereignty of Western nations. This does not mean that developed nations will start sending people to their deaths, but rather that *non-refoulement* is a determination to be made by national governments based on their own interests and their own citizens' moral and political calculations, not an objective obligation enforced in court by anti-sovereignty activists.

These broad international agreements bring to mind the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, which claimed to “outlaw” war. During the debate in the U.S. Senate over its ratification in 1929, Sen. James Reed of Missouri derided the agreement as “throwing a kiss to Europe”, but added: “if we are going to throw a kiss, let us understand that it does not carry with it any obligation of matrimony.”²¹

²⁰ GLEESON 2016.

²¹ CONGRESSIONAL RECORD 1929.

Unfortunately, the international “kisses” that relate to asylum do, in fact, claim to carry with them obligations, but in practice those obligations are one-sided. Does anyone think Yemen, for example, or Belarus feel any obligation to honor the provisions of the Refugee Convention? Are Pakistan or Cuba sued by domestic NGOs to comply with Convention Against Torture? Is the conduct of Azerbaijan or Equatorial Guinea changed in any way by the fact that they ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights?

Obviously not. The only nations whose sovereignty is limited by such agreements are democratic nations least likely to abuse asylum-seekers in the first place. Only once a nation has withdrawn from these agreements will it be able to reclaim sovereign control over its borders.

Only once that is done will destination countries be free to prohibit, by law, any asylum claim from an illegal alien.

The way forward

The challenge will be greater in Europe, due to the European Convention on Human Rights, though UK Prime Minister Sunak has threatened to withdraw from the ECHR if it is used to block the Rwanda deportation plan. Likewise, barring constitutional reforms, Israel’s Supreme Court is able to overturn any law it disapproves of, whether or not it is undergirded by treaty commitments.

But that change is key – illegal entrants must, by law, be prohibited from making an asylum claim. Asylum as a right must be abolished.

In one important way, this simplifies the challenge faced by receiving states, but also presents a challenge. The simplification comes from ending the judicialization of immigration policy. In the words of David Martin, a professor of law at the University of Virginia, “Asylum decisions may require the most difficult adjudication known to administrative law, owing both to the high stakes involved and the unique elusiveness of the facts.”²²

This leads to ever-greater procedural protections and due-process rights, endless layers of appeal, and growing cries for taxpayer-funded legal representation for illegal aliens. Control over a nation’s borders takes second place to “due process” rights of illegal aliens, as judges and lawyers argue endlessly about how many

²² MARTIN 2000.

particular social groups dance on the head of a pin. Categorically eliminating asylum for illegal entrants – including the excision of the 1951 definition of a refugee from domestic statutes – simply wipes away this entire body of law.

The challenge will be what to do with those illegal aliens who come anyway. Abolishing defensive asylum for illegal aliens will have no practical effect if there is nowhere to remove illegal aliens to. In most cases, of course, they would simply be deported to their home countries, but there will always be some from places which do not accept the return their own citizens (known in the U.S. context as “recalcitrant countries”²³) and others who come from places where the receiving nation, for its own reasons, decides against *refoulement*. The danger would be that, rather than granting the formal status of asylum, the receiving government might simply confer some other, lesser status that still permits the foreigner to stay – which was, after all, his goal all along.

To avoid this, an abolition of the current asylum framework would need to be accompanied by precisely the kind of efforts by the UK and others described above to offshore asylum processing. But rather than send illegal aliens to Mexico or Albania to pursue their U.S. or EU asylum claims, or judge which countries to send illegal entrants to based on the robustness of their own asylum systems, nations would decide on their own where to send illegals, based on the political preferences of their own citizens rather than reference to outside standards. There would be no reason, for instance, to ensure that recipient countries were signatories to the Refugee Convention, as the UK has in its assessment of what countries other than Rwanda it might deport illegal-alien asylum-seekers to.²⁴

Conclusions

Today’s asylum regime is a relic from an earlier age. Given the effectively unlimited number of people who have the means to use an asylum claim as a stratagem to move to a richer country, the 1951 refugee framework and everything flowing from it needs to be scrapped.

The only way to win is not to play the game. Asylum must no longer be available to anyone who crosses a developed nation’s border illegally.

²³ CADMAN 2019.

²⁴ DATHAN 2024.

Bibliography

- ARTHUR, Andrew A. (2021): How the Border Became the Disaster It Is, and How Biden Wants to Make It Worse. Center for Immigration Studies, 20 Sept. 2021. Source: <https://cis.org/Report/How-Border-Became-Disaster-It-and-How-Biden-Wants-Make-It-Worse#:~:text=The-,Morton%20Directive,-to%20Release%20Aliens>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- BRÖCKER, Michael – QUADBECK, Eva (2015): Interview mit Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel. *RP Online*, 11 Sept. 2015. Source: https://web.archive.org/web/20190208071052/https://rp-online.de/politik/deutschland/angela-merkel-das-grundrecht-auf-asyl-kennt-keine-obergrenze_aid-9533771. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- CADMAN, Dan (2019): Expedited Removal Finally to be Applied as Intended. Center for Immigration Studies, 23 July 2019. Source: <https://cis.org/Cadman/Expedited-Removal-Finally-be-Applied-Intended>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- CHADDOCK, Gail Russell (1997): As the World Shrinks, So Do Prices on International Calls. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 July 1997. Source: <https://www.csmonitor.com/1997/0709/070997.intl.intl.2.html>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- CONGRESSIONAL RECORD (1929): Source: <https://www.congress.gov/bound-congressional-record/1929/01/10/senate-section>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- DATHAN, Matt (2024): Revealed: UK targets four countries for Rwanda deal. *The Times*, 15 Apr. 2024. Source: <https://archive.fo/M9MYH#selection-2573.0-2573.51>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- ERNST, Douglas (2019): Jeh Johnson says border crisis is real: ‘I cannot begin to imagine’ 4K apprehensions per day. *The Washington Times*, 29 Mar. 2019. Source: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/mar/29/jeh-johnson-says-border-crisis-is-real-i-cannot-be/>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW (2023): Defensive Asylum Applications. Source: https://www.justice.gov/d9/pages/attachments/2019/05/17/16_defensive_asylum_applications.pdf. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- GLEESON, Madeline (2016): The Australia-Cambodia Refugee Relocation Agreement Is Unique, But Does Little to Improve Protection. Migration Policy Institute, 21 Sept. 2016. Source: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/australia-cambodia-refugee-relocation-agreement-unique-does-little-improve-protection>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.

- KRIKORIAN, Mark (2007): Shortfalls of the 1996 Immigration Reform Legislation. Center for Immigration Studies, 20 Apr. 2007. Source: <https://cis.org/Testimony/Shortfalls-1996-Immigration-Reform-Legislation>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- LANDAU, Christopher – MARSAL, Viktor – PÉNZVÁLTÓ, Nikolett – KRIKORIAN, Mark (2023): Panel Transcript: Gatekeeper Countries. Key to Stopping Illegal Immigration. Center for Immigration Studies, 28 Apr. 2023. Source: <https://cis.org/Transcript/Panel-Gatekeeper-Countries#:~:text=second%20best%20approach>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- LEAGUE OF NATIONS (1933): Convention Relating to the International Status of Refugees, League of Nations, Treaty Series Vol. CLIX No. 3663. Source: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/lon/1933/en/17584>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- LEHTO, Essi (2023): Finland mulls more border restrictions as asylum seekers ‘impossible’ to return. *Reuters*, 20 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finlands-president-says-impossible-return-asylum-seekers-2023-11-20/>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- MARTIN, David A. (2000): The 1995 Asylum Reforms. A Historic and Global Perspective. Center for Immigration Studies, 01 May 2000. Source: <https://cis.org/Report/1995-Asylum-Reforms>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- REUTERS (2024): U.K. begins detaining migrants set to be deported to Rwanda. 01 May 2024. Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/uk-detaining-migrants-deported-rwanda-rcna150180>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- STRUTNER, Suzy (2014): This Is What Your Flight Used to Look Like (And It’s Actually Crazy). *HuffPost*, 15 Jun 2014. Source: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/air-travel-1950s_n_5461411. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- UN (2022): World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results. 2022. Source: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/World-Population-Prospects-2022>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- UNHCR (1951): Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- U.S. CONGRESS (1965): United States Code: Immigration and Nationality, 8 U.S.C. §§ 1104–1401 (Suppl. 2 1964). Source: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg911.pdf>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.

- U.S. CONGRESS (1948): Displaced Persons Act of 1948: P.L. 774 – 80th Cong., Ch. 647 – 2d Sess. Source: <https://uscode.house.gov/statviewer.htm?volume=62&page=1009>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.
- WALSH, Daisy (2022): What happened when Israel sent its refugees to Rwanda. *BBC World Service*, 23 Jun. 2022. Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-61882542>. Accessed on 6 May 2024.

America's Enormous Hispanic Population Is Shifting to the Right Politically with Vast Consequences for the United States

Jim Robb

Abstract

In the United States, the political balance has been challenged by the millions of new immigrants from Spanish-speaking nations. Now approaching 20% of the U.S. population, Hispanics, as these persons and their descendants are called, are becoming a larger portion of U.S. voters. Like most immigrant groups, Hispanics began as mostly supporters of the Democratic Party. However, as Hispanics assimilate into the economic, cultural, and political life of the country, more and more are voting Republican. This article explains what is behind this political shift. It also gives a short history of Hispanics in the U.S. and looks at possible futures.

Keywords: United States, Hispanics, demography, voter behavior, politics

Introduction

Many nations have complicated domestic politics due to their heterogeneous populations. Notable examples include South Africa, with its large white and mixed-race minorities and sometimes tense relations between its various tribal groups, and Brazil, with 88 million Whites, 92 million mixed-race individuals, and 21 million Blacks, not including Indians. Nothing political can be attempted in these nations without giving thought to how various ethnic groups will receive it.

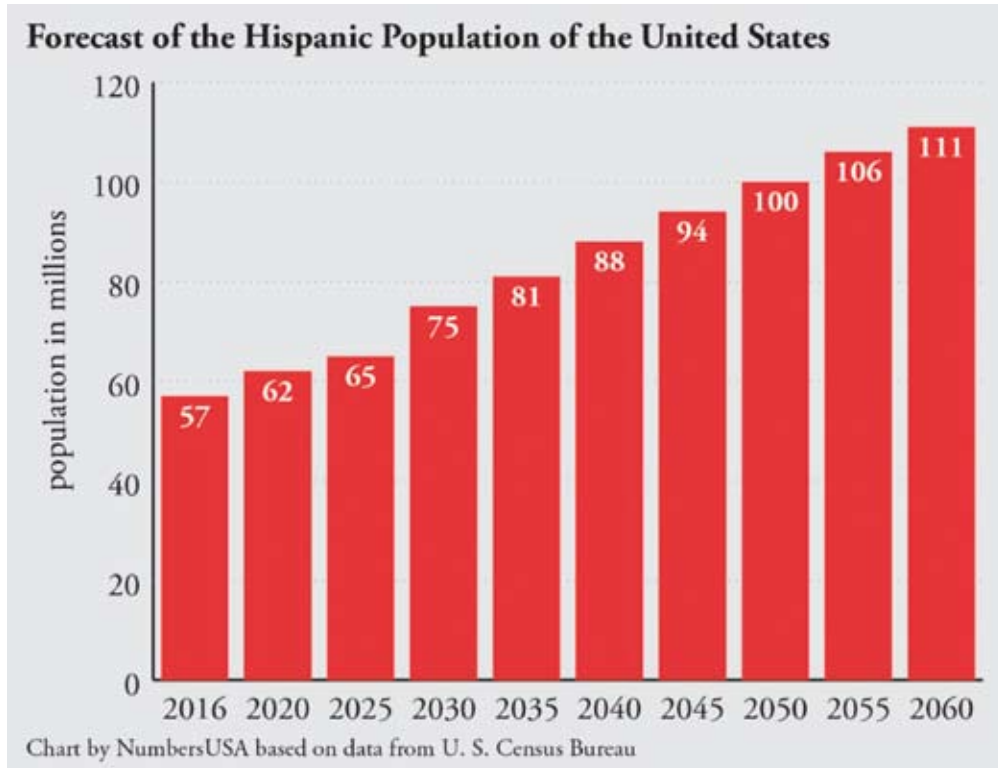
The United States's ethnic mix is also complex and changing fast. As of the 2020 decennial census, 57.8% of the population was non-Hispanic White. A further 12.1% was Black, and 6.1% was Asian. By far the largest minority group in the U.S. is now its gigantic Hispanic population, at 18.7% of the total.¹

This translates to 62.5 million residents out of 329.5 million of the 2020 population total. This number is similar to the entire population of the United Kingdom or of France. Moreover, Hispanic numbers are expanding very rapidly. The 62.5 million is up from 35.7 million who lived here in the year 2000. That's 74% growth in just

¹ UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2021a.

20 years. Hispanics are now closing in on being one-fifth of the U.S. population. The speed of this increase almost beggars belief, especially when you consider there were relatively few Hispanics in this country 50 years ago—only nine million!

Yet even these numbers seem modest compared to the projected size of the Hispanic population by the year 2060. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, unless government immigration policy changes, the Hispanic population will nearly double *again* by 2060, to about 111 million! That's more than the entire U.S. population during the First World War!



Of today's 62 million Hispanics in America as of 2020, two-thirds were born here. Plus, almost eight million foreign-born Hispanic adults have been naturalized as citizens and are now eligible to vote.² In the 2020 presidential election, 16.6 million

² Number of 18+ Hispanics as of June, 2022, 43,824,210. Number of U.S.-born 18+ Hispanics, 23,050,545. Number of foreign born 18+ Hispanics 20,773,665. Number of foreign-born 18+ Hispanic naturalized citizens, 7,991,798. Source: These numbers are based on an analysis of the June 2022 public use file of the Current Population Survey, which is collected each month by the Census Bureau for Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Hispanics did vote,³ a rise of six million from the 2016 election.⁴ That's 10.4% of the total votes cast. Put it another way, the Hispanic vote count increased 31% in just four years.

I will divide this study into two major sections. First, I will focus on the political alignment of Hispanics in the United States. Second, I will review the questions of how Hispanics came to be in the U.S., their economic prospects, and how assimilation is proceeding.

The political alignment of U.S. Hispanics

Until very recently, it was assumed that Hispanic Americans would always tend strongly Democratic, save for a few special cases, such as Cuban immigrants in South Florida who were focused on resisting Castro's communist revolution, and perhaps recent arrivals from other Latin America nations mauled by left-wing revolutions or revolutionary movements. The Hispanic allegiance to the Democratic Party is not hard to understand. Most newly established immigrant communities have voted for Democrats for two centuries. As the traditional party of outsiders, newcomers, and people needing a helping hand, the Democratic Party was the political embarkation point for Hispanics in America.

The results of the 2020 presidential election, plus the evidence of a myriad of political polls taken since the election, including a major poll commissioned by NumbersUSA, and also the results of a number of elections held since 2020, have forced just about everyone who studies politics for a living to agree that something potentially momentous is happening.

Hispanics are on the move politically. Unlike most Black Democrats, they seem unlikely to remain a predictable and endlessly patient voting bloc, frequently unhappy with positions taken by their party but too alienated from Republicans to contemplate a change. Instead, this vast population, so recently migrated from Spanish-speaking nations, is now involved in a *political* migration. Where they end up, nobody can know for sure. But their political trajectory may be similar to several earlier immigrant groups, such as Italians, who after voting mostly Democratic for the first several decades in the U.S., eventually stopped seeing themselves primarily as immigrants. When they made that transition, they started voting more Republican, which had always been the more immigration-restrictive

³ HERNDON – DIAZ – RUIZ – MASUOKA 2020.

⁴ UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2022a.

party. Will the same thing happen to Hispanics? Many political analysts are pondering this question, and it is the subject of this article.

The political stakes could not be higher. Axios stated in its July 2018 article, “Republicans are becoming more working-class and a little more multiracial. Democrats are becoming more elite and a little more white. Democrats’ hopes for retaining power rest on nonwhite voters remaining a reliable part of the party’s coalition. Democrats’ theory of the case collapses if Republicans make even incremental gains with those voters. Even small inroads with Hispanic voters could tip a number of Democratic-held swing seats to the GOP.”⁵

Especially interesting have been the views of a group of middle-aged, Clinton-era Democratic political gurus who were around when the White working-class began to defect to the GOP in large numbers. They think they’ve seen all this before and are giving urgent warnings to their fellow party members.

The dean of this group is Ruy Teixeira, the Yale University-educated expert on political demography⁶ best known for co-authoring the 2002 book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*. The book prophesied that the rapid growth of America’s Hispanic and Asian populations, together with the steady relative decline of America’s White working-class population, would likely result within a few years in a long-term, sustainable Democratic voting majority.

Teixeira, and just about everybody else writing on the subject in the early 2000s, presumed that the new Hispanic and Asian voters who would join the electorate in the coming years would support Democratic candidates for office, just as earlier voters from those groups had tended to do earlier in U.S. history. He put it this way, “It is fair to assume that if Democrats can consistently take professionals by about 10 percent, working women by about 20 percent, keep 75 percent of the minority vote, and get close to an even split of white working-class voters, they will have achieved a new Democratic majority.”⁷

In the 2020 presidential election, indeed, although Pres. Joe Biden and the Democrats again were terribly beaten among the White working-class, earning just 33% of their votes, they greatly improved with suburban voters (54%).⁸ Most importantly, 73% of minority voters voted for Biden, not far off the 75% Teixeira

⁵ KRAUSHAAR 2022.

⁶ Demographics are the statistical data of a population, such as age, income, education, etc.

⁷ JUDIS – TEIXEIRA 2002, 67.

⁸ IGIELNIK – KEETER – HARTIG 2021.

predicted they'd need to win elections consistently.⁹ But the *makeup* of Biden's 73% is what has been causing alarm among Democratic Party officials.

Mitt Romney earned only 27% of the Hispanic vote in 2012,¹⁰ and Donald Trump scored just 29% in his first campaign in 2016.¹¹ But after four years of border crackdowns and building the Wall, plus some shockingly ill-advised rhetoric from Trump about Mexican "rapists" and other criminals, Trump stunned everybody by gaining between 37% and 38% of Hispanic voters in 2020. Instead of driving Hispanic voters away, President Trump *attracted* many new Hispanic voters. To put this achievement in context, the 6+ million Hispanic votes Trump earned in 2020 is greater than the *total* number of votes cast by Hispanic voters for all candidates together in the 2000 presidential election, just two decades before.¹²

In the most recent U.S. election, the 2022 Congressional midterms, political observers were anxious to learn whether the Hispanic vote share for the right-leaning Republican Party would continue growing or would fall back to earlier, smaller levels. When the votes were counted, the CNN television network reported that the Hispanic GOP vote moved up yet again--to 39%.¹³

What is behind this rightward shift in Hispanic voting? Today, Ruy Teixeira leads a small but vocal and influential group of Democratic analysts who are warning that Hispanics are slipping from their grasp in the Biden era. Teixeira's *Substack* column, "The Democrats' Hispanic Voter Problem: It's Not As Bad As You Think – It's Worse," practically says it all:

"The Democrats are steadily losing ground with Hispanic voters. The seriousness of this problem tends to be underestimated in Democratic circles for a couple of reasons: (1) they don't realize how big the shift is; and (2) they don't realize how thoroughly it undermines the most influential Democratic theory of the case for building their coalition."¹⁴ Working-class Whites began to shift toward the Republican Party around 1972, when so many voted to re-elect Richard Nixon, and even more shifted to the GOP when Ronald Reagan was first elected president. The movement of this group towards the GOP has continued, with some interruptions and hiccups, ever since. Famously, the huge swing of White

⁹ SANTHANAM 2020.

¹⁰ EDISON MEDIA RESEARCH 2012.

¹¹ EDISON MEDIA RESEARCH 2016.

¹² SHEPHARD 2002.

¹³ HARRISON – VILCARINO 2022.

¹⁴ TEIXEIRA 2021.

working-class voters in the upper Midwest toward Donald Trump in 2016 put him into the White House.¹⁵

Whereas 60% of Whites who are at least 25 years old lack a four-year college degree, among Hispanics this number is 81%.¹⁶ A key idea I've proposed in my book *Political Migrants: Hispanic Voters on the Move* and in other writing is that the migration of Hispanic voters, both working-class and college graduates, into the Republican Party is not a unique phenomenon. Rather, it is the next and natural development in the movement of the White working-class into a party that more closely aligns with the general policy priorities, social views, and cultural sensibilities of working people of all ethnicities in this country. Overall, the Hispanic vote swing from the Democratic to the Republican column between 2016 to 2020 was eight points, with an even greater swing in certain Hispanic demographics.¹⁷

A massive amount of mostly Democratic Party-aligned research suggests this shift is not a one-time fluke. And that the shift is being fueled by a general distaste for the progressive social and economic positions that are dominant in today's Democratic Party. Indeed, it appears many Hispanic voters are turning to the Republicans not *in spite of* the greater Republican emphasis on controlling immigration, but *because* of this emphasis. Years of careful polling conducted by the Rasmussen organization and sponsored by my organization NumbersUSA strongly suggests that Democrats have missed the mark with likely Hispanic voters by basing their aggressive immigration stance on mass amnesties, less enforcement, and higher levels of foreign workers.

In Rasmussen polling conducted March 21, 2024, likely voters were asked, "On the question of illegal immigration, is the government doing too much or too little to reduce illegal border crossings and visitor overstays?" Of Hispanic voters, 55% said the government was doing "too little" to stop illegal immigration. Only 21% said "too much." In the same poll, 57% of Hispanic voters said that legal immigration should be reduced in number, as opposed to only 8% who said the number should be increased.

The one point of majority Hispanic agreement with the Democratic immigration agenda is on a limited amnesty for illegal immigrants already present in the United States. However, overwhelming Hispanic voter agreement is found in the desire for *more* enforcement at the border rather than *less*, and for employers to be required to use E-Verify to keep illegal workers from getting jobs. Most Hispanic voters

¹⁵ COHN 2016.

¹⁶ UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2020a.

¹⁷ SHEPARD 2021.

insist that employers claiming labor shortages should work harder to recruit non-working Americans rather than be allowed to bring in foreign workers, both lower and higher skilled. They also support ending immigration of relatives other than spouses and minor children.¹⁸

Democrats, by shifting their immigration policies sharply toward post-national globalism in the 21st century, may have cost themselves the votes of not just one working-class population (the White working-class) but of two. The second working-class group they may be losing is U.S.-citizen Hispanics.

Who are Hispanic Americans, and how did they end up in the United States?

To better understand these Hispanic political trends and where they might go, we need to look a lot deeper at who these Hispanic voters are, where they've come from, and what their political history has been.

A big part of what makes Hispanic voters so interesting for our political future is how many there are, how many more there will be in just a few years, and how very little political thinkers seem to understand them. Earlier in this article, I placed a chart showing that the Census Bureau estimates the Hispanic population to grow from today's 62 million to 111 million by 2060.

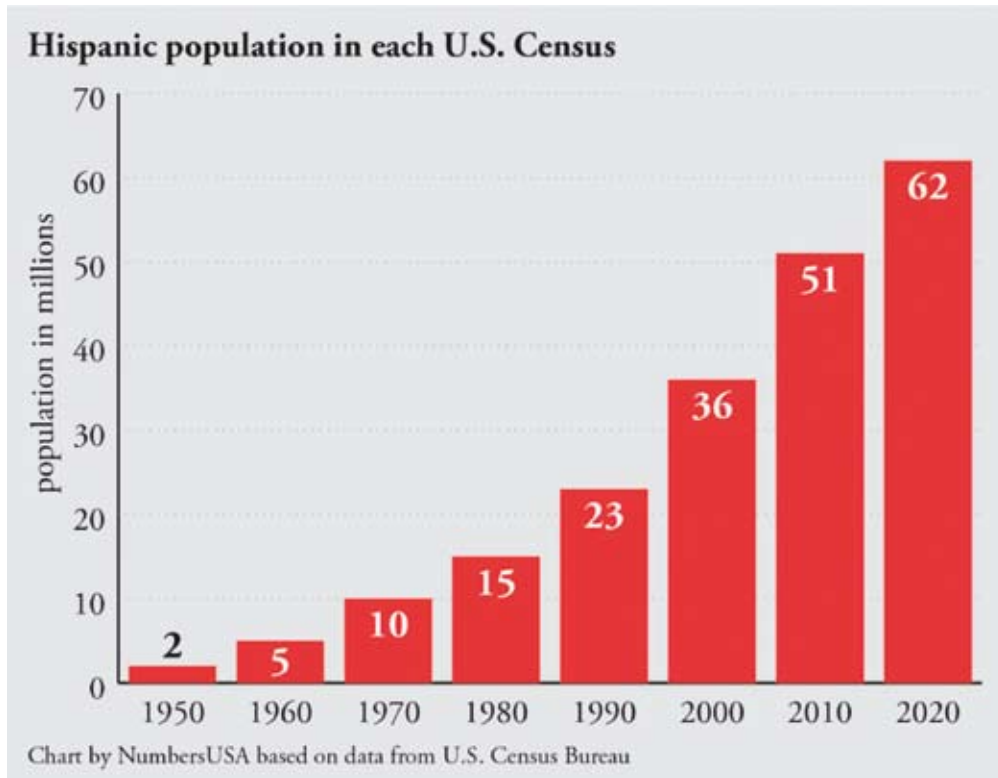
The chart below shows just how rapidly the Hispanic population has already grown.

Seventy years ago, just after the end of World War II, there were just over two million Hispanics living in the U.S. As of 2022, there are 62 million. In other words, the U.S. Hispanic population has mushroomed almost *30 times* in just seven decades!

To put the number 62 million in perspective, again, think about the United Kingdom. That's England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Lots of Brits, right? Total population? 68 million. America's northern neighbor, Canada, has only 38 million people. Within eight years the U.S. Hispanic population will be about *double* that of the entire Canadian population!

What does the term "Hispanic" even mean? This is surprisingly tricky to answer. The people we call "Hispanics" in the U.S. aren't really one people group. They

¹⁸ RASMUSSEN REPORTS 2024.



come from more than 20 nations and territories that share the Spanish language and/or culture. They are White, they are Black, they are American Indian, they are mestizo, and of other mixed races. Most—but far from all—speak Spanish with varying degrees of fluency. Though most relate to some Christian tradition, some are Jewish, some follow indigenous creeds, and a growing number claim no religion at all.

A fascinating study by Pew Research Center explains, “The most common approach to answering these questions is straightforward: Who is Hispanic? Anyone who says they are. And nobody who says they aren’t.”

For the most part, Hispanics are found only in the United States because “Hispanics” is a word adopted by the U.S. government, first appearing in the 1970 Census, as a catch-all term to cover the widely diverse population of residents described above. Spanish-speaking Guatemala, for example, is not filled with Hispanics. But

all, in several key ways, they are not unlike most other Americans. Like most White Americans, for example, the preponderance of Hispanic Americans are at least partially of European descent. And the fact that the first American in most Hispanic families arrived in this country speaking a language other than English doesn't make them distinct, either. The majority of other American ancestors also arrived in the United States speaking a non-English language. Yet, there are cultural and historical reasons Hispanic voters as a whole might respond differently to various political issues.

We need a quick review of how the Europeans in the United States differed from, and interacted with, the Europeans in Latin America. Let's think back to the Americas before Columbus sailed here in 1492. There were two gigantic continents Europeans had never seen before,¹⁹ but they weren't at all empty. Estimates vary wildly, but there were at least several million native people living in the Americas. There are no written records to tell us. Natives had built great empires in Peru (Incas) and Mexico (Aztecs), and several large confederacies of tribes in North America.

The Incan and Aztec empires were sophisticated. They mined gold, made metal weapons, built elaborate cities, and developed intricate government bodies. They were warlike; no pushovers militarily. But they were not a match for mounted, armored European soldiers with firearms, much less the new diseases the Europeans brought with them. For about 100 years after Columbus found the Caribbean islands and claimed all the Americas for Spain, the Spanish and the Portuguese dominated European colonization, and they concentrated on South America and the Caribbean Islands. Gradually they expanded into Florida, parts of what is now Texas, California, and some of the territory in between. Eventually, the Spanish and Portuguese settled around a million Europeans in the New World. Additionally, they also brought in more than one million kidnapped slaves from Africa to work the fields. Many Indians were also enslaved and worked in mining and agriculture.

Beginning in the early 1600s, England and France also sent explorers and colonists to the Americas, concentrating their efforts in the Caribbean and Eastern North America. We all know that England planted 13 colonies that thrived along the eastern seaboard, in addition to colonizing various "sugar" islands in the Caribbean, including Jamaica and Barbados. The British came to stay, and more

¹⁹ With the possible exception of Vikings and other seafaring traders and warriors, who established settlements as far as Greenland and perhaps on what is now the eastern shore of the U.S. around the year 1000 A.D.

than a million British colonists came to America during the colonial period. By the time of the American Revolution, the population of the 13 colonies exceeded 2 million. Additionally, the British transported 3.1 million slaves to North America, but only 2.7 million arrived alive after their hellish passage in slave ships. Many of the slaves went to the islands and not the 13 colonies.

Diseases imported into the Americas, especially smallpox, wiped out the largest portion of the native Indian populations. The survivors lost control of their lands and were relegated to marginal areas or were assimilated over time.

The French sent many fewer settlers to North America. Many were trappers or traders, with fewer of them farmers than in the English colonies. They settled chiefly in Eastern Canada but also extended settlements into what is now the American Midwest and down to the port of New Orleans.

In the 1760s, war broke out between France and England over control of North America. In America, we call this the French and Indian War, but it was merely one theater of a larger, global war called the Seven Years' War that was fought by the two titanic powers of Europe. In the end, England decisively triumphed, ejecting the French government, if not the actual French people or culture, from Canada.

Chasing the French out of Canada caused England to run up a massive war debt. To help pay down this debt, the King's government was determined to begin direct taxation on its American colonists. That is, money collected from colonists in America was to be taken back to the mother country. (American colonists were largely self-governing and had always taxed themselves for their colonial government expenses.) The colonists famously objected to the tax scheme on the grounds that they had no representatives in the British Parliament, and therefore they had no responsibility to pay for British government expenses. ("No taxation without representation!") It came to war, seven years of it. Fortunately for the Americans, the French wanted revenge for the loss of French Canada, and they sent soldiers and a navy to back up the Continental Army. In the end, General George Washington and his small army won the day.

The United States was formed. In 1803, France, under Napoleon Bonaparte, was facing yet another major war with Great Britain, and it needed cash. Also, with

the British in firm control of the transatlantic trade routes, France had no real way to exploit its American territories. So, France sold the huge portion of land it claimed in the middle of North America, called the Louisiana Territory, to the United States for \$15 million, or just 3 cents an acre. That coup was followed by the U.S. obtaining Florida from Spain in an 1819 treaty.

So, England continued to control Canada. The United States controlled much of the rest of North America. While France and Britain fought their endless wars in Europe and elsewhere for supremacy, Spain was undergoing a deep and permanent decline. The Spanish did not manage to use the massive treasure in gold taken from the New World to transform itself or its colonies into modern, productive economies. Poor economic performance led to military weakness. By the early 1800s, Spain lost control of its American colonies. By the second decade of the 19th century, revolution broke out throughout Latin America. Mexican residents began their revolution in 1810, and it took 11 years to gain independence. The areas of Mexico located in Central America did not wish to be included in Mexico, and they were allowed to form their own nations. Similarly, countries independent of Spain or Portugal were formed throughout South America.

So which group are the ‘real’ immigrants to America? With regularity, Hispanic activists have noted that it is a miscarriage of justice that their people who move into the United States from Mexico, Central America, or other parts of Latin America are called immigrants when so much of the current United States was once under the political control of Spain, then Mexico. Which group is the immigrants? One recently published book summarizes it in the title: *The Border Crossed Us: The Case for Opening the US-Mexico Border*.²⁰

There are a lot of ways to answer that question. One is that most people living in America are descended from immigrants. Even Native Americans migrated here thousands of years ago from Asia. Only the descendants of American slaves can rightly say they never immigrated—they were kidnapped and carried to these shores against their will. The real question is not *whether* Americans came originally from other places, but *when* they made those moves. Although Spain and Mexico claimed large portions of the American West until the mid-19th century, they never really populated it.

Mexico’s 1821 population of 6.65 million²¹ was not much less than the United States’ 10.3 million.²² The difference was that only about one percent of the

²⁰ CHACÓN 2021.

²¹ STATISTA 2022.

²² UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2020b, 1168.

Mexican population lived in the areas that are now part of the U.S.²³ That wasn't enough to wrest the land away from the fierce Indian tribes that dominated the Southern plains states, most especially the Comanches.

I spent much of my childhood in Abilene, Texas, a railroad town built in the 1880s as a stop for the Texas & Pacific Railroad (later absorbed into the Union Pacific Railroad), located between Ft. Worth and Midland. When I lived there in the 1960s and early 70s, Abilene had about 100,000 residents, three church-related colleges, lots of banks and independent oil drilling outfits, a small Black population, and an even smaller Hispanic one. Since one of the Comanche key hideouts was in nearby Buffalo Gap, no settlers dared live there until after the Indians were defeated. When settlers came, the Civil War was over, so no one was brought out to that arid place as a slave. Remarkably, when I think back on it, there were relatively few Hispanic people in Abilene when I was a boy. I never even tasted Mexican food until I was 10 or 11 years old. The Spanish language was rarely heard. The reason was simple: the same hostile Native American population that had kept out most White settlers also kept out Hispanics until the Comanches finally surrendered in 1875.²⁴

In fact, American settlers were first brought into Texas to help quell the Comanches. Outside of their small strongholds in the Rio Grande Valley and the mission town of San Antonio, Indians had prevented much settlement by Mexican people. The Americans were used to fighting Indians. The newly formed Mexican government instructed the American settlers to free any slaves they brought with them and practice the Roman Catholic faith when they arrived. The Americans were willing to fight the Comanches, but they did not free their slaves nor did many practice Catholicism.

By 1834, over 30,000 U.S. citizens already lived in Texas, most of them just recently having emigrated into that part of Mexico and overwhelmingly outnumbering the 7,800 Spanish-descent Mexicans who were settled there.²⁵ The Mexican government, sensing trouble looming, tried to reassert control, but it was already too late. The American settlers soon rebelled against Mexico, and they won their independence after several months of fighting, surrounding Mexican president Santa Ana and his army at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. Although the new Republic of Texas was not recognized by Mexico nor invited yet to be an American state, U.S. settlers poured in from mostly southern states, bringing their slaves

²³ GRATTON – GUTTMAN 2000, 137–153.

²⁴ For ease of communication in this article, I use the term “Hispanic” in its modern U.S. meaning when referencing the past, even though Spanish-descent residents of those times would not have used it.

²⁵ MENCHACA 2001.

with them. By 1845, Texas already had 125,000 people, including 30,000 slaves, but very few people of Mexican heritage.

In 1845, the United States annexed Texas, and that, plus a boundary dispute, erupted into the Mexican-American War, a large-scale conflict with many bloody battles, all fought in Mexico. Many of the prominent American Army officers who would later lead both sides in the Civil War, such as Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant, first gained real battle experience in Mexico. After two years of grueling warfare, the American victory was total, and Mexico was forced to sign over vast lands in exchange for \$15 million. Immediately after gaining these new territories, the United States started forming states and territories out of them. Again, hordes of American settlers poured in, eager to get cheap or free land. Of the small Mexican population in Texas at the time, some moved south out of the state while very few additional Mexicans moved north into Texas.

California was also seized and annexed by the United States in 1848 at the conclusion of the Mexican-American War. It had only an estimated 6,500 White and Mestizo residents of Spanish descent at that time. The Indian population has been estimated at between 30,000-150,000. There were also a few hundred U.S. citizens there at the time of the changeover. But the very first year of American control, a huge vein of gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill, California, and the news caused a worldwide stampede of would-be prospectors and merchants to cross deserts and oceans to stake their claim.

Within two years, the U.S. Census counted 92,597 persons in California, excluding Native Americans. After 20 years of U.S. stewardship, by 1870, the non-Indian population stood at 560,247. Yet the Hispanic portion of that number was just 22,409, less than 4 percent of the total. They went from being the dominant non-indigenous group to being a tiny minority. Although Mexico had once owned territory that now made up much of the western United States, Hispanic people had never really occupied it. . . not until the mass immigration of the late-20th century.²⁶

Characteristics of American Hispanics

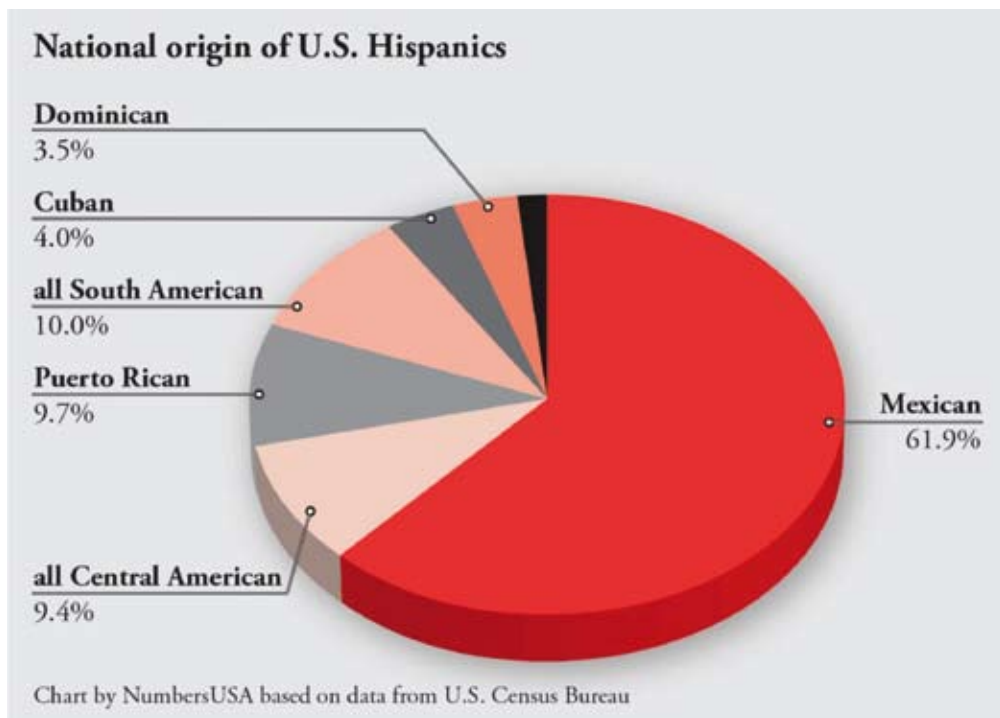
Understanding who Hispanics are takes time and more than a little bit of patience. Again, this is not a homogenous group.

²⁶ GIBSON – KAY 2022.

The word “Hispanic” itself is a one-size-fits-all moniker for an enormous population of American residents whose ancestry and/or language and/or culture have some connection with Spain. Here are some questions that show why getting your mind around who Hispanics are is so difficult. Below are some basic questions that are often asked, and their answers.

Are all Hispanics descendants of people who came to the Americas from Spain?

No, not at all. Many Hispanics are largely descended from African slaves who were brought to Spanish colonies sometime in the past. Others are mainly of Indian heritage, not having many or perhaps any European genes. Still others have European ancestry, but those ancestors are not from Spain or Portugal. Many Hispanics in the U.S. are descended from Italian, German, French, or other nationalities that first immigrated to a Spanish-speaking country before finally settling in America.



Further, although more than half of Hispanics in America trace their roots to Mexico, other large groups are from Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory whose residents

are all born U.S. citizens, Central America, South America, and various Caribbean islands, such as Cuba. It's important to remember that although Puerto Ricans who have moved to the 50 states are counted as part of the Hispanic population, they are not really immigrants, since Puerto Rico is a territory of the U.S.

Do all Hispanics speak Spanish?

No. Fourteen million Hispanics, about a quarter of the total, speak only English in their homes. As of 2019, approximately 47% of U.S.-born Hispanics spoke only English at home.²⁷ Some Hispanic people speak no Spanish at all. Not surprisingly, the more time that passes between the original immigration experience of a family, the less Spanish is spoken. By the third generation in America, fewer than a quarter of Hispanics can really speak the Spanish language. But is knowledge of the Spanish language necessary to being Hispanic? No! According to the Pew Research Center's rule of thumb, you're Hispanic if you call yourself such.²⁸

Are Hispanics members of a particular race?

No. "Hispanic" is not a term for a race. In fact, a growing number of Hispanics in America tell the Census Bureau they consider themselves White. A good example of this is the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas, that area in the southernmost tip of the state that touches the Rio Grande River and borders Mexico. The population there is 93.5% Hispanic, according to government data, but 88% of the residents also describe themselves as White, with another 9% calling themselves "some other race," and 1.4% saying that they are of two or more races.²⁹

If this feels confusing, don't worry: Everyone is confused by it, including Hispanics! The government describes "Hispanic or Latino" as "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish culture or origin *regardless of race*"³⁰ (emphasis added). But if they don't all descend from Spanish or other European countries, and they're not of a particular race, how can you describe them?

²⁷ KROGSTAD – BUSTAMANTE 2021.

²⁸ FLORES 2017.

²⁹ RGV HEALTH CONNECT 2024.

³⁰ UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2022b.

“Throughout history, Latinos have been both colonized and colonizers,” writes Geraldo Cadava. “By this, I don’t mean simply the obvious: that Latinos are mestizos, the mixed-race descendants of Indigenous Americans, Spaniards, Middle Easterners, Africans, and other ethnic and racial groups. I also mean that Latinos have identified not only as survivors of imperialism and its ills, but also as supporters of imperial and national powers.”³¹

Are Hispanics all Catholics?

No. Although the Roman Catholic Church was the established state church of Spain and so held a virtual monopoly on religious expression in the Spanish Empire that settled most of Latin America, other faiths have been gaining strength in Latin America and amongst Hispanics in the United States over the past century.

A titanic 2014 study of religion among U.S. Hispanics found that 48% considered themselves Catholics, with another 25% belonging to a Protestant Christian church, most of these being Evangelicals. Additionally, one percent was Jewish. Twenty percent were unaffiliated with any religious group. Of these, two percent were Agnostic and another two percent were Atheist.³² The religious affiliation of Hispanics is important in predicting their political alignment, as with all other groups of American voters. More religious persons tend to vote for more conservative parties and candidates. And as was stated above, two-thirds of Hispanics now residing in the U.S. were born in this country (including Puerto Ricans living here). About 20 million, however, are immigrants. Millions of these immigrated legally, usually by virtue of family categories commonly known as chain migration. As of the 2020 Census, at least 8.7 million had either crossed the border illegally or overstayed visas to become illegal aliens.³³ Unless they receive some sort of citizenship-track amnesty, these individuals will not be eligible to vote. However, the federal practice automatically gives citizenship to the children of even illegal immigrants if they are born on U.S. soil.

The illegal alien population has been expanding very fast since Joe Biden became president in January 2021 and immediately began relaxing border security and asylum measures. In fact, during the first three years of Pres. Biden’s term, an estimated 5 to 6 million *new* illegal immigrants succeeded in evading border

³¹ CADAVA 2022.

³² PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2022.

³³ MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE 2019.

authorities or were arrested at the border and then released on parole to travel and work inside the United States.³⁴ An unknown number of these are of Hispanic heritage.

Because of legal and illegal immigration, the Hispanic population is currently increasing by more than two million a year.

Are all Hispanics in America called Hispanic?

NO! Since the government and all other data-gathering entities use *self*-reporting to determine whether someone should be termed Hispanic, it gets much trickier to keep track as immigrants become children and grandchildren of immigrants. By the fourth generation in this country, only *half* of Hispanics are still willing to describe themselves as “Hispanic,” although some of them might answer that they are of Hispanic heritage.³⁵ As assimilation does its wonderful work, many people just want to be known as Americans, but that will make counting the numbers harder and harder as time goes by.

Hispanics are a very young population: 31% are under 18, and only 7.7% are over 65.³⁶ That contrasts with the U.S. population as a whole which is 22.1% under 18³⁷ and 16% over 65.³⁸ And despite Hispanics’ domination of immigration flows over the last half-century, it is a mistake to conclude that most Hispanics are foreign-born or that most immigrants are Hispanics. Only a third of Hispanics are foreign born, and only 40% of immigrants in this country are Hispanic. Of these, only about 35% came to this country illegally (as of the 202 U.S. Census).³⁹ Nearly eight million of the Hispanic immigrants have already become U.S. citizens.⁴⁰

Why did Hispanic immigrants come to America?

Hispanics have been present in what is now the United States since the beginning of the republic, but only in tiny, tiny numbers. Most Hispanics in America today

³⁴ CAMAROTA – ZEIGLER 2022.

³⁵ LOPEZ – GONZALES-BERRERA – LOPEZ 2017.

³⁶ USAFACTS 2022.

³⁷ UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2021b.

³⁸ THE ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING 2021.

³⁹ CAMAROTA – ZEIGLER 2021.

⁴⁰ USA FACTS 2022.

come from immigrants who've arrived since the end of World War II. As stated earlier, a third of Hispanics are immigrants themselves. Of the two-thirds who were born here, most of their first American forbears have come since 1980. In general, America's Hispanics are a recently arrived immigrant group.

Why did Hispanics move to this country? In almost every case, it was to get jobs here. Yet unemployment rates are not currently sky-high in most countries the immigrants hailed from. Mexico's official unemployment rate in 2021 was only 4.4%. Honduras, 8.5%. El Salvador, 5.9%.⁴¹ What motivates people coming from countries where jobs are not scarce to migrate to the U.S.?

Part of the answer is that immigration comes in waves. When a country finds itself in trouble because of natural disasters, like hurricanes as did several Central American nations periodically over the past few decades, or succumbs to civil war, as happened in both El Salvador and Nicaragua in the 1980s, or when personal security for normal people collapses as it has in parts of northern Mexico because of drug cartel mayhem being experienced right now, countries can temporarily become extremely hard to live and work in. One neighbor told me he decided to leave his native El Salvador for the U.S. during their civil war when rebel troops landed in his town by helicopter one day, and they began firing on civilian men of military age.

Those are the times many people choose to try another country within a relatively short period. During the 1980s, for example, half a million Salvadorans moved to the United States, most illegally.⁴² Again, in 2001, when El Salvador suffered two large earthquakes, another big group left for north of the Rio Grande. But these setbacks in various nations are often temporary. Even today, with relatively good economic conditions, which translates into enough jobs for the local workforce, Central Americans and Mexicans still make the trip north. Why?

One argument is that Central America and various other Hispanic nations are perpetually violent places, that criminality there is committed on such a vast scale that living in those countries is equivalent to being in a war. A Doctors Without Borders study, for example, states that the "extreme levels of violence experienced by people fleeing from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, and underscores the need for adequate health care, support, and protection along the migration route through Mexico."⁴³

⁴¹ THE WORLD BANK 2024.

⁴² MENJÍVAR – GÓMEZ CERVANTES 2009.

⁴³ MÉDECIN SANS FRONTIÈRES 2017, 5.

How true is this? In 2018, El Salvador reported a murder rate of 52 per 100,000 residents. The equivalent figure for all of the United States for that year was 4.96.⁴⁴ So, 10 times higher in El Salvador. But most Salvadorans move to or near America's big cities where murder rates can be similarly horrific. In 2019, for example, the most murderous city in the United States was St. Louis, with 64.5 murders per 100,000 residents,⁴⁵ higher than any nation in Central America.⁴⁶

Although migrants from Central America and Mexico are usually portrayed in American media as leaving countries full of miserable people, the World Happiness Report of 2022, powered by Gallup surveys, found the populations of those countries reporting a level of happiness that ranked in or near the top third of all nations. The widely referenced report ranked Honduras 58th, Nicaragua 54th, El Salvador 48th, Mexico 35th, and Guatemala 30th, just two spots below Italy. (The United States was ranked 19th, behind No. 16 Costa Rica.)⁴⁷

The biggest draw of America has always been lots of high-paying jobs. Even if jobs can be found in sending countries, wages are much lower. In the United States, the average after-tax monthly salary is \$3,619, whereas in Mexico it's only \$628, and in El Salvador a mere \$377 per month.⁴⁸ Of course, the cost of living is also amazingly higher in the U.S., so not all of the extra money made here results in higher living standards. Yet enough of the money earned in America can be saved and sent home that such "remittances" make up 23% of the entire Gross Domestic Product of El Salvador.⁴⁹

Hispanics in the American workforce

What jobs do Hispanics do in America? Since we're talking about millions of individuals from more than 20 nations, and with two-thirds of them actually born here, obviously the answer is every job there is!

However, there are concentrations in certain industries. The Department of Labor says Hispanics hold 18% of all jobs in this country. That's up from only 8.5% just 30 years ago. Nationally, 35.7% of construction workers are Hispanic; 43%

⁴⁴ WORLD POPULATION REVIEW 2024.

⁴⁵ FIELDSTAT 2022.

⁴⁶ WORLD POPULATION REVIEW 2024.

⁴⁷ HELLIWELL – HUANG – WANG – NORTON 2022.

⁴⁸ WAGE INDICATOR FOUNDATION 2022.

⁴⁹ AP NEWS 2021.

of those in “farming, fishing, and forestry” occupations have Hispanic heritage; Hispanics hold 37.9% of “buildings and grounds, cleaning and maintenance” jobs, and hold 27.3% of “food preparation and serving” jobs.⁵⁰

On the East and West Coasts, and in states like Texas and Arizona, even those large numbers may feel low. Yet there are enormous swaths of the country with relatively low immigration where few Hispanics yet live. On the non-service industry side, 10.7% of all management positions are now held by Hispanic workers, a percentage that has doubled in the past two decades.

It’s not surprising that Hispanics have become such an enormous slice of service sector jobs for several reasons:

Incredible supply of young workers

62 million Hispanics lived in America as of the 2020 Census, and that was 18.7% of the population. Hispanics are about nine years younger than non-Hispanic Americans on average, so they are proportionally more likely to be in the labor force and also able to do the hard physical jobs best suited to younger workers.

Less education than the average American resident

As of the year 2016, only 16% of Hispanic adults had earned a 4-year college degree or higher, compared to 37% of Whites.⁵¹ This means that the vast majority of Hispanic workers in this country are working class. (Again, the term “working class” is used only to refer to educational attainment, not to whether people hold jobs, etc. Working class simply means you have less education than a four-year college degree.) So not only are there tons of young Hispanic workers, fewer of them have the kind of education that leads to professional jobs.

Lower wages among Hispanic immigrants

As noted, two-thirds of America’s Hispanics were born in this country, but a third moved here from less developed nations, all of whom feature sharply lower wages. As said above, Salvadoran wages are about 1/10th that of American wages. Immigrants from poor countries may be more than willing to accept wages that

⁵⁰ DUBINA 2021.

⁵¹ SCHAK – NICHOLS 2017.

are far less than that offered to native-born persons who may have held the jobs previously.⁵²

Illegal immigrants who often remain in low-level service sector jobs

Of the perhaps 9 million Hispanic illegal immigrants in America, upward mobility is tough. To knowingly employ an illegal alien is itself illegal, so they often work in the service sector, sometimes being paid under the table. Most prestige jobs require vetting with the government's E-Verify system to check if the person is actually authorized to work in the United States.

That all said, America's Hispanic population is so vast that there are also millions of highly educated Hispanics working at the very top levels of their fields. Examples include Lin-Manuel Miranda, the *wunderkind* who brought the musical "Hamilton" to Broadway at age 35. Successful Hispanic politicians include Senator Ted Cruz of Texas. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor is obviously at the top of her field. Ellen Ochoa, a NASA astronaut, logged over 1,000 hours in space and was the 11th director of the Johnson Space Center in Houston.⁵³

About 233,000 Hispanics were currently serving in America's armed forces in the year 2021. Twenty-three percent of the U.S. Marine Corps was of Hispanic heritage that year.⁵⁴ During the Afghanistan war, this included my nephew, Luke, a Peruvian native who served our nation as a Marine, winning a Purple Heart after being wounded in combat. (Luke fully recovered.)

The U.S.-Mexico border is a current and perennial security and law-and-order problem for our nation. Recently – December 2023 – almost 250,000 persons were being arrested each month as they attempted their illegal entry into the United States. Currently, the Biden administration is allowing well more than half of these detained individuals to proceed into the interior of the country, often with work permits, cell phones and bus tickets, all courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer. This breakdown of order has become one of Pres. Biden's biggest political problems and is actually working to shift more Hispanics AWAY from Biden's party and toward Republicans. Significantly, few realize that Hispanics are heavily represented in the U.S. Border Patrol ranks, making up about half of all agents serving.⁵⁵

⁵² OECD 2022.

⁵³ ALVAREZ KLEINSMITH 2021.

⁵⁴ DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION 2001.

⁵⁵ LARSON 2018.

In several elite professions, however, Hispanics are severely underrepresented. Only about 6.5% of U.S. doctors are Hispanic.⁵⁶ And only 8% of STEM workers (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) are Hispanic.⁵⁷ The relatively short period of time that most Hispanic families have been in America probably accounts for some of this, since it has always taken time for most immigrant families to fully establish themselves in the country.

Considering that 19.3% of America's college students are of Hispanic heritage, however, a number in line with their overall share of the U.S. population, better days are ahead for Hispanic representation in good-paying jobs.

⁵⁶ NORTON 2021.

⁵⁷ FRY – KENNEDY – FUNK 2021.

Bibliography

- ALVAREZ KLEINSMITH, Sara (2021): 24 Famous Hispanic Americans Who Made History. *Reader's Digest*, 16 Oct. 2021. Source: <https://www.rd.com/list/hispanic-americans-who-made-history/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- AP NEWS (2021): Remittances to El Salvador rebound after early pandemic drop. *Associated Press*, 19 Jan. 2021. Source: <https://apnews.com/article/sansalvador-coronavirus-pandemic-el-salvador-1623416c0ddc7aa238911f8a422b6c8b> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- CADAVA, Geraldo L. (2022): There's No Such Thing as 'the Latino Vote'. *The Atlantic*, 14 Feb. 2022. Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/03/latino-voting-history-america/621302/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- CAMAROTA, Steven A. – ZEIGLER, Karen (2021): Immigrant Population Hits Record 46.2 Million in November 2021. *Center for Immigration Studies*. 20 Dec. 2021. Source: <https://cis.org/Camarota/Immigrant-Population-Hits-Record-462-Million-November-2021> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- CAMAROTA, Steven A. – ZEIGLER, Karen (2022): Foreign-Born Population Hit Record 47 Million in April 2022. *Center for Immigration Studies*. 1 June 2022. Source: <https://cis.org/Report/ForeignBorn-Population-Hit-Record-47-Million-April-2022> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- CHACÓN, Justin Akers (2021): *The Border Crossed Us: The Case for Opening the US-Mexico Border*. Haymarket Books, 2021.
- DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (2001): *2001 Portrait of Hispanic Active Duty Service Members*. Department of Defense Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Fiscal Year 2000. Source: <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Spotlight/2021/national-hispanicheritage-month/Hispanic-Infographics-2021.pdf> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- DUBINA, Kevin (2021): Hispanics in the Labor Force: 5 Facts. *U.S. Department of Labor Blog*, 15 Sept. 2021. Source: <https://blog.dol.gov/2021/09/15/hispanics-in-the-labor-force-5-facts> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- EDISON MEDIA RESEARCH (2012): Exit polls 2012: How the vote has shifted. *The Washington Post*, 6 Nov., 2012. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/2012-exit-polls/table.html> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.

- EDISON MEDIA RESEARCH (2016): Behind the Numbers: The 2016 National Election Exit Poll. Edison Research. 10 Nov. 2016. Source: <https://www.edisonresearch.com/behind-numbers-2016-national-election-exit-poll/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- FIELDSTAT, Elisha (2022): Murder Map: Deadliest U.S. Cities. *CBS News*. 23 Feb. 2022. Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/murder-map-deadliest-u-s-cities/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- FLORES, Antonio (2017): How the U.S. Hispanic Population is Changing. *Pew Research Center*. 18. Sept. 2017. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/18/how-the-u-s-hispanic-population-is-changing/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- FRY, Richard – KENNEDY Brian – FUNK, Cary (2021): STEM Jobs See Uneven Progress in Increasing Gender, Racial and Ethnic Diversity. *Pew Research Center*. 1 Apr. 2021. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/04/01/stem-jobs-see-uneven-progress-in-increasing-gender-racial-and-ethnic-diversity/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- GIBSON, Campbell – JUNG, Kay (2022): *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990 for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States*. U.S. Census Bureau Population Division, September 2002. Source: <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- GRATTON, Brian – GUTTMAN, Myra P. (2000): Hispanics in the United States: 1850-1920. *Historical Methods, Summer*, 2000, 33(3) 137- 153. Source: <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/immigration/Hispanics-US-1850-1990.pdf> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- HARRISON, Chase – VILCARINO, Jennifer (2022): Chart: How U.S. Latinos Voted in the 2022 Midterm Election. *AS/COA*. 17 Nov. 2022. Source: <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/chart-how-us-latinos-voted-2022-midterm-election> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- HELLIWELL, John F. – HUANG, Haifang – WANG Shun – NORTON, Max (2022): Happiness, Benevolence, and Trust During COVID-19 and Beyond in *World Happiness Report*, 2022. Source: <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2022/happiness-benevolence-and-trust-during-covid-19-and-beyond/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- IGIELNIK, Ruth – KEETER, Scott – HARTIG, Hannah (2021): Behind Biden's 2020 Victory. *Pew Research Center*, 30 Jun. 2021. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/06/30/behind-bidens-2020-victory/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- JUDIS, John – TEIXEIRA, Ruy (2002): *The Emerging Democratic Majority*. 2002. New York, NY: Lisa Drew/Scribner.

- KRAUSHAAR, Josh A. (2022): The great realignment. *Axios*. 14 Jul. 2022. Source: <https://www.axios.com/2022/07/14/republicans-democrats-hispanic-voters> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- KROGSTAD, Jens Manuel – BUSTAMANTE, Luis-Noe (2021): Key facts about U.S. Latinos for National Hispanic Heritage Month. *Pew Research Center*, 9 Sept. 2021. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/09/key-facts-about-u-s-latinos-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- LARSON, Emily (2018): Fact Check: Are Half of All Border Patrol Agents Hispanic? *The Daily Signal*, 26 June 2018. Source: <https://www.dailysignal.com/2018/06/26/fact-check-are-half-of-all-border-patrol-agents-hispanic/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- LOPEZ, Mark Hugo – GONZALEZ-BERRERA, Anna – LOPEZ, Gustavo (2017): Hispanic Identity Fades Across Generations as Immigrant Connections Fall Away. *Pew Research Center*. 20 Dec. 2017. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2017/12/20/hispanic-identityfades-across-generations-as-immigrant-connections-fall-away/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- MÉDICINS SANS FRONTIERS (2017): *Forced to Flee Central America's Northern Triangle: A Neglected Humanitarian Crisis*. Source: https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/msf_forced-to-flee-central-americas-northern-triangle_e.pdf Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- MENCHACA, Martha (2001): *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans*. University of Texas Press. Austin, Texas. 2001.
- MENJÍVAR, Cecilia – GÓMEZ CERVANTES, Andrea (2009): El Salvador: Civil War, Natural Disasters, and Gang Violence Drive Migration. *Migration Policy Institute*, 29 Aug. 2009. Source: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/el-salvador-civil-war-natural-disasters-and-gang-violence-drive-migration> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE (2019): Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States. Source: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- Nate COHN, Nate (2016): Why Trump Won: Working Class Whites. *The New York Times*, 9 Nov. 2016. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/upshot/why-trump-won-working-class-whites.html> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- NORTON, Amy (2021): Majority of U.S. Doctors No Longer White, Male. *HealthDay News*, 20 July 2021. Source: <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/news/20210720/white-mens-grip-on-us-health-care-may-be-slipping> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.

- OECD (2022): Average Annual Wages. *OECD.Stat*. Source: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AV_AN_WAGE Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- PEW RESEARCH CENTER (2022): Religious Landscape Study. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/racial-and-ethnic-composition/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- RASMUSSEN REPORTS (2024): *Rasmussen Reports Immigration Index - Latest Numbers*. 21 March 2024. Source: https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/immigration_index/crosstabs_rasmussen_reports_immigration_index_march_21_2024 Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- RGV HEALTH CONNECT (2024): Population Data for Region: Rio Grande Valley. Source: <https://www.rgvhealthconnect.org/demographicdata?id=281259§ionId=935> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- SANTHANAM, Laura (2020): Three voter trends that helped Biden. *PBS*, 9 Nov. 2020. Source: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/3-voter-trends-that-helped-biden> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- SCHAK, J. Oliver – NICHOLS, Oliver Howard (2017): *Degree Attainment for Latino Adults: National and State Trends*. The Education Trust, 2017. Source: https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Latino-Degree-Attainment_FINAL_4-1.pdf Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- SHEPHARD, Steven (2002): The Latino Population and the Latino Electorate. *Pew Research Center*, 1 Oct. 2002. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2002/10/01/the-latino-population-and-the-latino-electorate/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- STATISTA (2022): *World Population Prospects, 2022*. 21 June 2022. Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1066995/population-mexico-historical/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- STEVEN SHEPARD, Steven (2021): New poll shows how Trump surged with women and Hispanics — and lost anyway. *Politico*, 30 June 2021. Source: <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/06/30/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- TEIXEIRA, Ruy (2021): The Democrats’ Hispanic Voter Problem. *The Liberal Patriot*, 9 Dec. 2021. Source: <https://www.liberalpatriot.com/p/the-democrats-hispanic-voter-problem-dfc> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- THE ADMINISTRATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING (2021): 2020 Profile of Older Americans. Source: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/Aging%20and%20Disability%20in%20America/2020ProfileOlderAmericans.Final_.pdf Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- THE WORLD BANK (2024). International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database, as cited in “*Unemployment, total* (% of total labor

- force) (modeled ILO estimate). Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU (2020a): *U.S. Census Bureau Releases New Educational Attainment Data*. 30 Mar. 2020. Source: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/educational-attainment.html#:~:text=%E2%80%8B> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU (2020b): *Colonial and Pre-Federal Statistics*. August 2020. Source: <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/statcomp/documents/CT1970p2-13.pdf>. Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU (2021a): *The Chance That Two People Chosen at Random Are of Different Race or Ethnicity Groups Has Increased Since 2010*. 12 Aug. 2021. Source: [https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/2020-united-states-population-more-racially-ethnically-diverse-than-2010.html#:~:text=Figure%201\)%3A,The%20most%20prevalent%20racial%20or%20ethnic%20group%20for%20the%20United,18.7%25%20of%20the%20total%20population](https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/2020-united-states-population-more-racially-ethnically-diverse-than-2010.html#:~:text=Figure%201)%3A,The%20most%20prevalent%20racial%20or%20ethnic%20group%20for%20the%20United,18.7%25%20of%20the%20total%20population). Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU (2021b): *Population Under Age 18 Declined Last Decade*. 12 Aug. 2021. Source: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/united-states-adult-population-grew-faster-than-nations-total-population-from-2010-to-2020.html> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU (2022a): *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2020, Current Population Survey*. 21 Apr. 2022. Source: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU (2022b): *About the Hispanic Population and its Origin*. 15 Apr. 2022. Source: <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html#:~:text=OMB%20defines%20%22Hispanic%20or%20Latino,or%20origin%20regardless%20of%20race>. Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- USAFacts (2022): *The Hispanic population has quadrupled*. *USAFacts*. 18 April 2022. Source: <https://usafacts.org/articles/demographics-hispanic-americans/> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- WAGE INDICATOR FOUNDATION (2022): “ARCHIVE—Living Wage Series—El Salvador—September 2019—In SVC, per Month” Wage Indicator Foundation. <https://wageindicator.org/salary/wages-in-context>. Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.
- WORLD POPULATION REVIEW (2024): *Murder Rate by Country, 2022*. Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/murder-rate-by-country> Accessed on 29 Apr. 2024.

Further Reading

- ANDERS, Evans (1982): *Boss Rule in South Texas*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982.
- BARRETTO, Matt A. (2010): *Ethnic Cues: The Role of Shared Ethnicity in Latino Political Participation*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010.
- BECK, Roy (2021): *Back of the Hiring Line*. Arlington, VA: NumbersUSA, 2021.
- CADAVA, Geraldo L. (2020): *The Hispanic Republican*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2020.
- CARRIGAN, William D. – WEBB, Clive (2013): *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Chacón, Justin Akers (2021): *The Border Crossed Us: The Case for Opening the US-Mexico Border*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2021.
- FRAGA, Bernard L. (2018): *The Turnout Gap: Race, Ethnicity, and Political Inequality in a Diversifying America*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- FREY, William H. (2015): *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2015.
- GEST, Justin. (2022): *Majority Minority*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022.
- GOMEZ, Laura E. (2020): *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2020.
- HERNDON, Michael – DIAZ, Sonja – RUIZ, Bryanna – MASUOKA, Natalie (2020): *The Power of the New Majority: A 10 State Analysis of Voters of Color in the 2020 Election*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative, 2020.
- HINOJOSA, Gilberto Miguel. (1983): *A Borderlands Town in Transition*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1983.
- JUDIS, John – TEIXEIRA, Ruy (2002): *The Emerging Democratic Majority*. New York, NY: Lisa Drew/Scribner, 2002.
- KAMMER, Jerry (2020): *Losing Control*. Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Studies, 2020.
- MALAVE, Idelisse – GIORDANI, Esti (2015): *Latino Stats: American Hispanics by the Numbers*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2015.
- MENCHACA, Martha (2001): *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans*. Austin, TX, University of Texas Press. 2001.
- MUZZY, David Seville (1911): *An American History*. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1911.

- PATTERSON, Thomas E. (2022): *Is the Republican Party Destroying Itself?* Seattle, WA: KDP Publishing, 2022.
- PHILLIPS, Steve (2016): *Brown Is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority*. United States: New Press, 2016.
- ROBINSON, Edgar Eugene (1934): *The Presidential Vote. 1896-1932*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1934.
- SANCHEZ, Juan O. (2016): *The Ku Klux Klan's Campaign Against Hispanics, 1921-1925*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2016.
- SANCHEZ, Leslie. (2007): *Los Republicanos*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- TEIXEIRA, Ruy – ROGERS, Joel (2000): *America's Forgotten Majority*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000.

Immigration, Population Growth, and the “Environment”

Eric A. Ruark

Abstract

Net migration has been the main driver of U.S. population growth for several decades, resulting in direct and lasting ecological effects. Calls for population stabilization were at the forefront of the U.S. environmental movement from the 1970s until the late 1990s. Multiple bipartisan federal commissions recommended that the U.S. government pursue population stabilization as a policy objective and recognized immigration as the main driver of future U.S. population growth. By the year 2000, the Sierra Club and the other major U.S. environmental groups had reversed their position and now lobby against any effective immigration restrictions. While the European Union is facing a much different demographic situation than the United States, both of their futures will be determined in large part by immigration policies.

Keywords: Immigration, U.S. Immigration History, Population Stabilization, Environmentalism, Sustainability

Introduction

There is a phrase that inevitably enters into any discussion about immigration to the United States: “America is a nation of immigrants.” That is true, but the conversation can’t begin and end there. The “nation of immigrants” tautology is very often used as a stratagem to brush aside any discussion of the actual history of immigration to the United States and, more consequentially, to avoid a critical examination of present policies. This is especially the case when it comes to the ecological effects of immigration-driven population growth.

The United States was not founded by immigrants. It was colonized and settled by Europeans. The British gained supremacy in North America following the Seven Years War (1756–1763), known to American schoolchildren as the French and Indian War. In 1776, thirteen colonies in British America declared their independence. In 1783, the Treaty of Paris brought the Revolutionary War to an end with Great Britain formally recognizing the United States of America as a sovereign, independent nation.

In its early years, United States grew its population almost exclusively from natural increase.¹ Large numbers of immigrants relative to previous decades began to come to the United States after the Irish Potato Famine (ca. 1850). Following the American Civil War came the Great Wave of immigration from Europe that provided “factory fodder” during America’s Industrial Revolution.

The importation of enslaved Africans to America, an essential part of the nation’s history, is *not* part of the history of immigration. Further, immigration from Europe after the Civil War was crucial to the system of *de jure* racial segregation that persisted in American for a century after emancipation. Mass immigration also enabled rapid western expansion, and the displacement and decimation of the Native American population and the near extinction of the American bison. To the original European settlers, America was unspoiled, untamed, and untapped, a continent full of endless opportunities and unlimited resources. This mindset persisted well into the 20th Century and persists still in the idea of “American Exceptionalism.”²



Figure 1. Little Italy, New York City ca. 1900.

¹ U.S. CENSUS BUREAU 1975.

² Some historians credit Alexis de Tocqueville with originating that concept to describe Americans’ view of themselves and their nation. It is Frederick Jackson Turner who developed it as an historic analysis in his “frontier thesis.” Turner sees this epitomized in America’s embrace of Manifest Destiny and the settling of the western territories. The historiographical importance of Turner’s thesis on American scholars is comparable to Max Weber’s “Protestant work ethic.”

There has long been an effort to romanticize and even mythologize America's immigration history. More recently this invented past has been weaponized against those who put forward the self-evident truth that America is more than an abstract idea, exempt from the lessons of history and the laws of physics.

The Second Great Wave: Immigration to America post-1965

Edward Kennedy, Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, and younger brother of President John Kennedy, said in support of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act):

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 of this country 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 ... In the final analysis, the ethnic pattern of immigration under the proposed measure is not expected to change as sharply as the critics seem to think.³

Senator Kennedy probably believed what he said at the time, but the 1965 amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 law did fundamentally alter immigration numbers and resulted in the demographic transformation of the United States. What's perhaps most widely known is that the law got rid of the national origin quotas that limited immigration to mostly Europeans. The most far-reaching consequence, however, was the prioritization of family-based immigration. Whereas prior law had set immigration quotas based on the demographic composition of the United States in 1920, the 1965 law put in place a system where new immigrants were able to determine future immigration by sponsoring family members, creating unending "chain migration" and an ever-growing demand for increases in annual admissions. The now system operates on autopilot, so to speak, without little regard to economic conditions or the national interest – certainly it is not in line with the political will of the majority of American voters.⁴

³ "The Legacy of the 1965 Immigration Act: Three Decades of Mass Immigration," Center for Immigration Studies. September 1, 1995.

⁴ GALLUP 2024. Recent polling on the issue has concentrated on public reaction to the unprecedented surge of illegal immigration across the U.S. southern border and found widespread opposition to the Biden Administration's policies. There does exist extensive polling on legal immigration and guest worker admissions that shows American voters want a reduction in annual

Senator Kennedy was correct in that the Hart-Celler Act did not cause immigration to the United States to reach one million a year, though it did more than double annual immigration in the twenty years after it became law compared to the twenty years that preceded it. Immigration began to average one million annually starting in 1990, when Congress raised the ceiling on admissions by 150 percent. This came on the heels of an amnesty for three million people, mostly from Mexico, signed into law in 1986 by President Ronald Reagan. The promise of a “one-time amnesty” was made in exchange for border security and interior enforcement that never materialized. As of March 2024, the illegal alien population in the United States is approximately 13-15 million.⁵

Table 1 shows annual average immigration to the United States by decade since it was first recorded in 1820. *Table 2* shows percentage of the foreign-born population in select years.

admissions and more protections for American workers included in immigration law. Gallup has a long running series of polls on American’s satisfaction with “the level of immigration.” However, Gallup’s sample for these polls is not confined to voters, U.S. citizens, or even legal U.S. residents.

RASMUSSEN REPORTS 2024. NumbersUSA sponsors a monthly Rasmussen poll of likely voters and asks them specific questions about their support for annual immigration levels, as well as questions on border security and protections for U.S. workers.

HARVARD CAPS/HARRIS POLL 2024. Harvard-Harris polls have found similar support for immigration reduction among U.S. likely voters, in particular, see HARVARD CAPS/HARRIS POLL 2018.

Attempts by Congress to increase immigration has met with widespread public resistance. The most striking example was in 2013 when the so-called Gang of Eight bill that would have granted amnesty to at least 12 million illegal aliens in the U.S. and doubled both annual legal immigration and guest worker admissions ran into fierce grass roots opposition. See THE ATLANTIC 2013. The bill did pass the Senate in June 2013 but was stalled and eventually died after Majority Leader Eric Cantor, second in command of the House of Representative at the time, suffered a shocking loss in the Republican primary in June 2014, which was seen largely as a referendum in his district on the Senate bill, which Cantor sought to help pass through the House.

⁵ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY 2019; PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2023; CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES 2022; THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION 2019.

Prior to President Biden taking office, the estimates of the illegal alien population in the United States ranged from 10-12 million. From what has been widely reported and confirmed by public statements by Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, well over 5 million inadmissible aliens have either been released into the United States or are known to have gotten into the country by evading Border Patrol agents. That total number may be as high as 8-10 million by March 2024.

Year	Avg/Year	Total/Decade
1820s	12,850	128,502
1830s	53,838	538,381
1840s	142,734	1,427,337
1850s	281,455	1,427,337
1860s	208,126	2,081,261
1870s	274,214	2,742,137
1880s	524,857	5,248,568
1890s	369,429	3,694,294
1900s	820,239	8,202,388
1910s	634,738	6,347,380
1920s	429,551	4,295,540
1930s	69,938	699,375
1940s	85,661	856,608
1950s	249,927	2,499,268
1960s	321,375	3,213,749
1970s	424,820	4,248,203
1980s	624,438	6,244,379
1990s	977,540	9,775,398
2000s	1,029,943	10,299,430
2010s	1,063,345	10,633,446

Table 1. Annual Immigration to U.S. by decade⁶

Year	Total Population	Population %
1910	13.5 million	14.7%
1940	11.6 million	8.8%
1970	3.9 million	4.7%
2000	31.1 million	11.1%
2023	49.5 million	15.0%

Table 2. Size and Percentage of U.S. Foreign-born Population⁷

Immigration (technically net international migration) has been the main driver of U.S. population growth since the waning of the Baby Boom (1946 to 1964). Immigration's contribution to total U.S. population growth depends on when one starts to measure. For example, a 2015 report by the Pew Research Center estimated that immigration had accounted for 55 percent of total U.S. population growth between 1965 and 2015, 72 million out of a total growth of 131 million. In that

⁶ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY 2022.

⁷ U.S. CENSUS BUREAU 2006; CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES 2023b.

same report, Pew projected that immigration would account for 88 percent (103 million) of total U.S. population growth between 2015 to 2065.⁸ A 2019 report by the Center for Immigration Studies projected that immigration would account for 95 percent of total U.S. population growth between 2017 and 2060.⁹

A couple things to note. The first is that the numbers of immigrants in *Table 1* refer to individuals who were admitted to the U.S. as legal permanent residents according to the laws in place at the time. Today, most Americans view an “immigrant” as someone who has received a “green card,” the common name for a permanent resident card. Immigrant admissions do not include those who entered the United States illegally, or those who entered on temporary visas, including guest workers. Our purpose here is to examine the contribution of net migration on the size of the U.S. population, so there is no need to make careful distinctions about how an individual came to the United States or their legal status therein – which is very important in other discussions.

Table 2 shows all foreign-born individuals who were present and counted in the United States at the time. A snapshot of the U.S. foreign-born population gives an understated representation of immigration’s effect on U.S. population growth because the United States has birthright citizenship, so children born to immigrants don’t retain the immigrant status of their parent as in many other countries.

Growthism Emerges Triumphant

During the 1960s, the U.S. environmental movement became a powerful cultural and political force, which was on full display at the first Earth Day commemorated on April 22, 1970. One of the main themes then was U.S. population stabilization.¹⁰ Talk of population stabilization was common at large demonstrations that took place on college campuses and in high schools across the nation, but this was very much a “mainstream” affair. Republican President Nixon and his wife, Pat, planted a tree at the White House to commemorate the inaugural Earth Day. Nixon had signed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a law requiring federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts of policy implementations, four

⁸ PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2015.

⁹ CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES 2023a.

¹⁰ THE WASHINGTON TIMES 2021.

months earlier, and he signed legislation creating the Environmental Protection Agency three months after Earth Day.

This all came on the heels of President Nixon creating a commission on population growth headed by John D. Rockefeller III, whose brother was Governor of New York at the time and who later served as Vice-President under Gerald Ford. The Rockefeller commission ultimately concluded, “In the long run, no substantial benefits will result from further growth of the nation’s population,” while underlining immigration’s specific role in contributing to that growth (relatively minor at that time) and cautioning against allowing illegal immigration to continue.¹¹

A decade later, a commission headed by a Catholic priest, Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame, discussed immigration’s contribution to U.S. population growth with the implication that stabilizing the U.S. population was a desired policy outcome.¹²

In 1993, President Clinton established the President’s Council on Sustainable Development which recommended in its task force report that Congress better regulate immigration because:

*The size of our population and the scale of our consumption are essential determinants of whether or not the United States will be able to achieve sustainability... This is a sensitive issue, but reducing immigration is a necessary part of population stabilization and the drive toward sustainably.*¹³

A second bipartisan commission, this one fittingly mandated by the Immigration Act of 1990, was tasked with examining and evaluating U.S. immigration policy, and providing recommendations for its improvement. Civil Rights icon and former U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Jordan was chosen to chair the committee which has since taken her name. The Jordan Commission, in very clear terms in 1997, called for an end to chain migration and a substantial reduction in immigration admissions which would have brought annual admissions to effectively half of their then current level. The commission also recommended vigorous measures to combat illegal immigration and rejected amnesty for foreign nationals present in the U.S. without legal status. While not a point of emphasis, the commission

¹¹ COMMISSION ON POPULATION GROWTH AND THE AMERICAN FUTURE 1972.

¹² SELECT COMMISSION 1981.

¹³ PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, TASK FORCE REPORT 1996.

did recognize the widespread and, at the time, uncontroversial concern that “our future wellbeing depends upon both conservation, and stabilizing population.”¹⁴

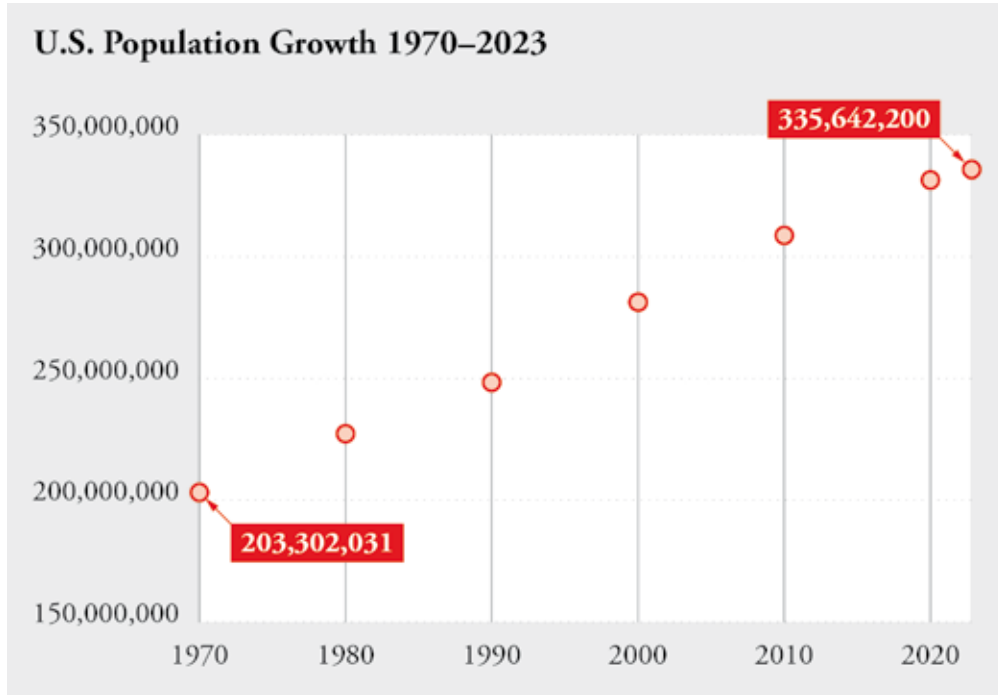


Figure 2. US Population Growth, 1970–2020.

The U.S. population did not begin to stabilize after the first Earth Day in 1970 (Figure 2). Nor has Congress heeded any of the recommendation of the various bipartisan commissions that recommended substantial cuts in immigration flows or responded to public demand for immigration reduction. As of 2023, the U.S. population had increased by 132.3 million since 1970, by 87 million since 1990. Between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses, the U.S. added 22 million additional residents, something many in the American media portrayed as indicative of a looming demographic collapse.

When and why advocacy for population stabilization ceased to be a potent force in American politics are perplexing questions. Those who once held mainstream opinions, ones rooted in the scientific consensus of the day, were banished from polite society, seemingly overnight. The only in-depth scholarly examination of this abrupt turnabout pinpoints 1998 as the year environmental groups “retreated” from support of population stabilization and began to openly attack those who

¹⁴ U.S. COMMISSION ON IMMIGRATION REFORM 1997.

still held to this position. That was the year the Sierra Club, one of the oldest and most influential environmental group in the United States, purged old guard population stalwarts from leadership position.

In 1998, the national Sierra Club leadership defeated those who tried to return their organization to its earlier pro-stabilization policy, which advocated both lower fertility and immigration. It remains to be seen whether this failed attempt represented the last gasp of the 1970-era environmental-population movement or if it was in fact the opening skirmish in a resurgent struggle. One indication that the latter might be true is that below national boards and staffs there were large numbers of members and activists who never dropped their commitment to population stabilization; in the 1998 Sierra Club national membership referendum, 40% of voters chose to overturn their national board of directors on the population issue, in spite of a concerted board effort to marginalize and stigmatize stabilization advocates.¹⁵

The mainstream environmental movement in the United States has since completely moved away from any discussion about population and instead concerned itself with Global Climate Change, and more recently, “Environmental Justice.”¹⁶ The Sierra Club, which once advocated for population stabilization and recognized the need to bring immigration levels in-line with that objective, were being pressured by activist donors to back off. Famously, a donor gave \$101.5 million to the organization in 2001 with the caveat that the Sierra Club drop any discussion of immigration reduction, which in turn forced it to remain silent on immigration-driven population growth.¹⁷ The Sierra Club’s about-face on the issue eventually led David Brower, the first executive director of the Sierra Club, to resign from its board of directors in disgust. “Overpopulation is perhaps the biggest problem facing us, and immigration is part of the problem. It has to be addressed,” said Brower.¹⁸

Those who point out the history behind the establishment of Earth Day, or who maintain a position that was once one of the pillars of the U.S. environmental movement, are now accused of “eco-fascism” by the well-funded environmental groups, whose position on immigration and economic growth have converged with

¹⁵ BECK – KOLANCKIEWICZ 2000.

¹⁶ BECK – KOLANCKIEWICZ 2000; KAMMER 2018.

¹⁷ THE NEW YORK TIMES 2023. David Gelbaum, who made his fortune “from the rarified world of Wall Street hedge funds,” told Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope that, “if they ever came out anti-immigration, they would never get a dollar from me.” By “anti-immigration,” Pope meant support for more restrictive immigration policies.

¹⁸ THE SEATTLE TIMES 2000.

the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Wall Street financiers.¹⁹ This convergence is part of a broader shift in American politics that has seen Democratic leaders aligning the party with the objectives of multinational corporations, while at the same time framing its agenda in the language of a global progressive platform.

The best things for workers in America, so their argument goes, is to expand the U.S. labor market through open immigration so that all the world's workers can come to United States and enjoy high wages, access to healthcare, childcare, and other benefits, and protections from unscrupulous employers provided via a strict system of federal regulation. Any concerns about the impacts of adding hundreds of millions more people to the population via immigration are dismissed with the default accusation of racism, while derivative markers are set up to trade carbon credits.

The mainstream environmental movement's abandonment of population stabilization was a bitter pill to swallow for those who had worked for many years to elevate it to the forefront of national political discourse and had received support at the highest institutional levels for the implementation of policies directed toward that end. Former Wisconsin Governor and U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson, the man considered the founder of Earth Day, wrote in his 2002 autobiography:

[W]e won't stabilize our population as long as immigrants to the United States continue to add 1.3 million people to the population each year – 300,000 of them entering the country illegally.... Never has an issue with such major consequences for this country been so ignored. Never before has there been such a significant failure by the president, Congress, and the political infrastructure to address such an important problem. We are faced with the most important challenge of our time – the challenge of sustainability – and we refuse to confront it.

Immigration and U.S. Population Growth: What Lies Ahead?

The second most common phrase in any discussion about immigration is that it “grows the economy.” This is true in that adding tens of millions of people to the population makes the U.S. economy larger than it would have been otherwise as

¹⁹ Any search for “Eco-facism and Immigration” will bring up countless opinion articles and academic works accusing immigration restrictionists of xenophobia, racism, “climate change denialism,” etc. For a measured discussion of how thoroughly multinational corporations have infiltrated the U.S. environmental movement and are determining the agenda of its largest, most well-funded groups, see MACDONALD 2008.

measured in the size of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is also true that the benefits of the growth from immigration accrues to immigrants and those who employ immigrants. Per capita GDP for U.S. workers shrinks.²⁰ What concerns us here isn't so much the economics of immigration as much as the economic argument that immigration is necessary to *perpetuate* growth.

The axiom that immigration is necessary to grow the U.S. economy assumes that this growth must continue indefinitely. This conflicts with another axiom that nothing, including the U.S. economy, can grow forever. So, what is the compromise? Usually those who favor continuing mass immigration make the argument that America is relatively “empty” and can grow its population exponentially, adding tens of millions if not billions more people before any difficulties arise – difficulties future generations will somehow solve with “technology.”

When someone says that the United States is “empty,” what they mean is that it's not full of people. And so, they propose more immigration to fill it up with people and houses and schools and shopping centers and farm-to-table-restaurants and solar farms and landfills and wastewater treatment plants and so on. The error in their logic is that they forget the simple adage that conservationists know well: It's not how many the land can contain but how many it can sustain.

In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau projected that the population would reach 404 million in 2060, an increase of almost 70 million people from its 2023 level. A new Census Bureau projection was released in 2023 that put the number well below that at 364 million in 2060. The more recent Census Bureau population projections, however, do not reflect current immigration numbers. As Steven Camarota, Director of Research at the Center for Immigration Studies, noted at the time, the Census Bureau ignored its own current net migration numbers and its estimation of the U.S. foreign-born population.²¹ Two other projections done at about the same time, one by the Congressional Budget Office and one by the Social Security Administration, which better accounted for current immigration numbers projected the United States to grow considerably more. Whichever number one accepts, all projections show the U.S. population continuing to increase over the next half century mainly driven by immigration.

²⁰ BORJAS 2016; NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES 2017; CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE 2013.

²¹ CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES 2023a.

	Census Bureau Main Series	Census Bureau “High Immigration”	Congressional Budget Office	Social Security Administration
2030	345,074	351,303	354,498	354,034
2060	364,287	396,954	387,619*	406,027
2100	365,558	435,346	N/A	481,459

* The CBO projection ends in 2054. 2060 number was projected by author by extending previous CBO trendline.

Table 3. U.S. Total Population Projections²²

Long-standing frustration with the pace of immigration helped propel Donald Trump to victory over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. While Trump’s effort to enact permanent legislative reforms was anemic, he did put in place executive policies that, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly decreased illegal border crossings and slowed overall immigration. Upon his inauguration in January 2021, President Biden immediately rescinded his predecessor’s border policies and eventually created what he calls “new lawful pathways” for aliens that Congress has deemed inadmissible, violating both existing law and the constitution’s separation of powers. The result has been an unprecedented surge in illegal immigration that has now surpassed legal admissions. When President Biden’s first term ends in January 2025, the number of foreign nationals added to the U.S. population may well have grown by 12 to 15 million in just four years.²³

²² U.S. CENSUS BUREAU 2023a; U.S. CENSUS BUREAU 2023b; CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE 2024; SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION 2023.

²³ THE NEW YORK TIMES 2021; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY 2024; CBS NEWS 2024; NEW YORK POST 2024; WASHINGTON EXAMINER 2023.

The U.S. had admitted over one million legal immigrants per year since 1990. The Biden Administration announced in 2021 a new plan to, as reported in *The New York Times*, “significantly expand the legal immigration system.” This entails faster processing but also circumventing or ignoring existing caps. From January 2021 to January 2024, there were 8.9 million total border encounters of inadmissible aliens, 6.5 million of those were Border Patrol encounters at the U.S. southwest border. The Biden Administration has not been forthcoming with numbers on how many have been released into the United States. It is a safe assumption given DHS data that at least half of illegal border crossers have been released, though DHS secretary Mayorkas said in January 2024 that “over 85%” of illegal border crossers were being released. This after crossings had exceeded 300,000 in just December 2023. DHS had also released over one million inadmissible aliens on “humanitarian parole.” Added to this is the number of “gotaways” that evade Border Patrol. The number of known gotaways has exceeded two million. The number of unknown gotaways can only be a matter of speculation.

The volume of border crossers under President Biden has created a situation which many have referred to as “unsustainable.” This raises the obvious question about what immigration policies are sustainable. Americans can be forgiven for not having a ready answer, as that term has acquired nebulous connotations. “Sustainable” has become a marketing catchphrase, meaning everything and nothing all at once. What is clear to Americans is that any credible immigration system must have clearly defined limits, and those limits must be vigorously enforced. In the words of Barbara Jordan:

Credibility in immigration policy can be summed up in one sentence: those who should get in, get in; those who should be kept out, are kept out; and those who should not be here will be required to leave.²⁴

So, who gets in, and how many? Tens of millions of people around the world would move to the United States right now because they want to experience the “American Dream,” which entails conspicuous consumption and just as conspicuous production of waste.²⁵ No one moves to the United State in order to reduce their carbon footprint. Urban sprawl and the loss of open space is the inevitable byproduct of America’s continuing growth. Smart growth strategies based on high density development and access to public transportation only, at best, delays that inevitability.

NumbersUSA has done a series of studies since 2000 measuring urban sprawl based on government data starting in 1982 that measures newly developed land. In our 2022 national study, we found that between 1982 and 2014 the United States lost 69,000 square miles (179,000 sq. km) of open space – an area larger than the state of Florida.²⁶ Seventy-one percent of that loss was due to population growth. Over that same period, 56 percent of U.S. population growth was due to immigration.

When they are asked, Americans express a strong desire for a future different than the one they are being offered. In each study, state residents have been asked about growth and development. A majority, each time, have expressed a desire to slow or put an end to further growth. Even in a state like Idaho that has relatively low population density, it’s the rate of growth that concerns residents, and how rapid growth is transforming communities.²⁷ These same respondents are concerned about farmland loss, a decline in air and water quality, and water shortages – a major issue

²⁴ TESTIMONY OF BARBARA JORDAN 1994.

²⁵ GALLUP 2023.

²⁶ NUMBERSUSA 2022.

²⁷ NUMBERSUSA 2023.

in the American West. Respondents are also intent on maintaining their “quality of life,” something much different than “standard of living.” Many Americans have an attachment to a particular place and want to preserve the unique character of *their* community, including preserving its unique landscape.

Immigration and population in perspective

Given their age structure and fertility trends, Western democracies face a clear choice: Either continue to accept large numbers of immigrants or deal with declining populations. According to projections, the United States will experience substantial growth because of high levels of immigration for the next 75 years. For European Union member states, even with immigration at its current pace, the future looks very different. The total population of the European Union is projected to decline beginning in 2026, decreasing by 11 million in 2054 by 33 million by 2100 (*Figure 3*). A lot can happen between now and 2100, but 2026 is close at hand and 2054 is, as the saying goes, just up the road. How are European Union leaders planning for this demographic reality, especially given the political opposition to current immigration schemes?²⁸

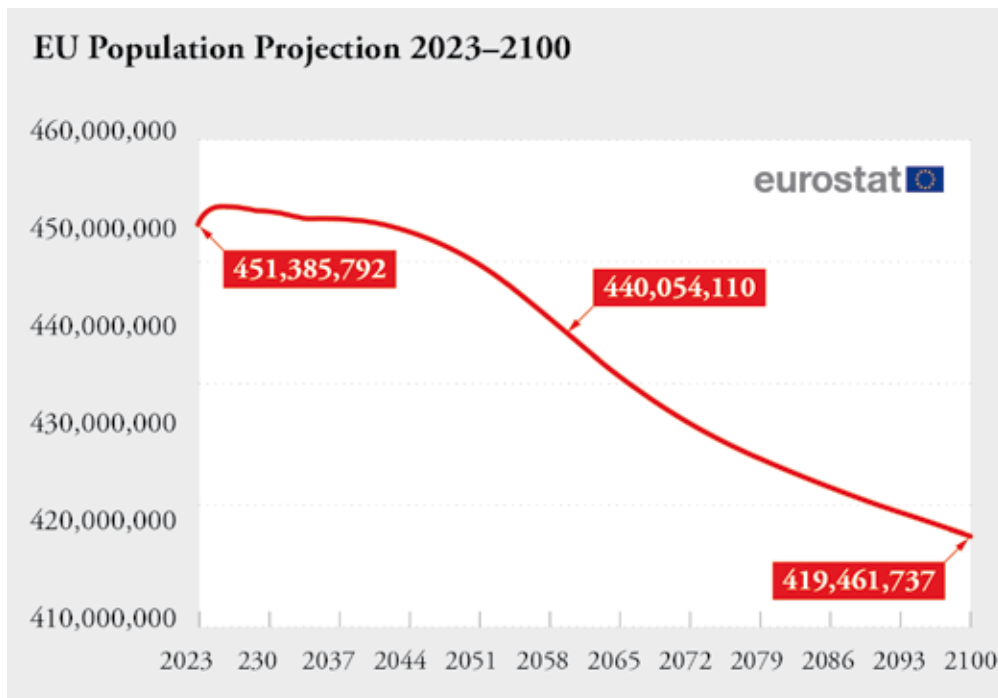


Figure 3. EU Population Projection, 2023–2100.

²⁸ EUROSTAT 2024a. See also CAFARO – DÉRER 2019.

An interesting example within the European Union, both demographically and politically, is Hungary. Eurostat put Hungary’s population at 9.7 million in 2023 (Figure 4). It projects the country’s population to decline by 540,000 by 2060, and by 2100 a decrease of 630,000 from its 2023 level – a relative drop-off that is not so dramatic and may be mitigated by the government’s current pro-natal policies, which may account for Eurostat’s projection that there will be an upswing in population numbers around 2080. Hungary’s government has taken significant actions to prevent illegal immigration, at times defying Brussels, and to combat fraudulent asylum seekers. Hungary’s population very well could stabilize in the long-term, a very favorable position to be in if one thinks stabilization in the long-term is a worthwhile goal. That is an interesting question for Hungary – and for all of the Western world. A crucial question all nations must eventually face.

The situation is complex, much more than whether voters support or oppose immigration. Likewise, total population doesn’t tell the whole story. Internal migration will also greatly shape the future demographic makeup of the European Union as long as the Schengen Agreement remains in effect. There are many variables that affect population in the long-term, and one always has to preface any prediction with “if current trends persist.”²⁹

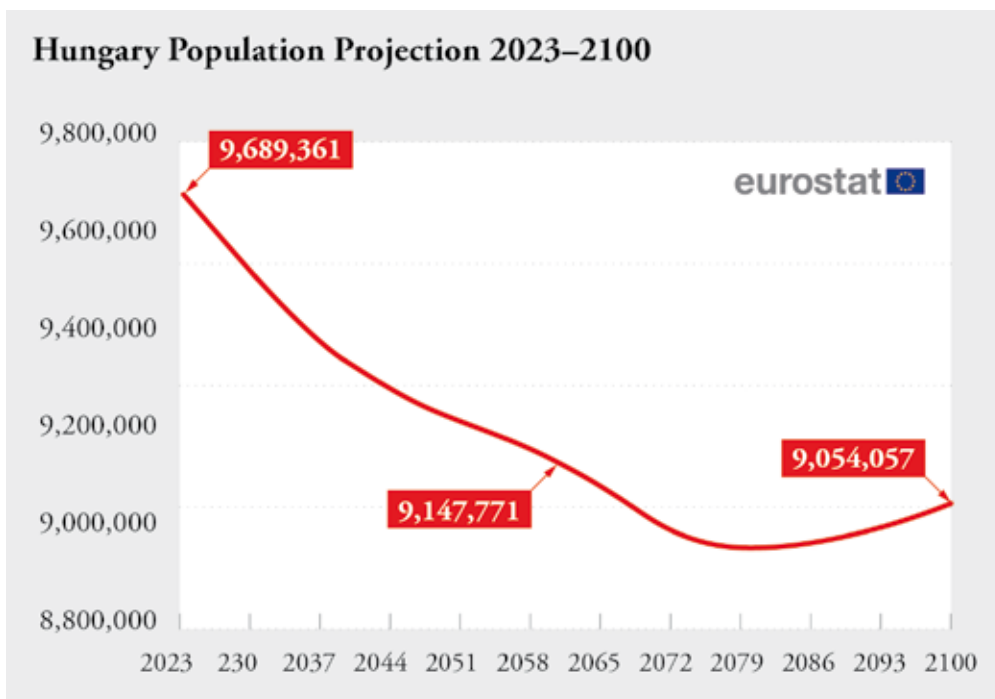


Figure 4. Hungary Population Projection, 2023–2100.

²⁹ EUROSTAT 2024b.

It's not melodramatic to say that Europe is facing an existential crisis here, on a level that the United States is not, at least not yet. This is due to a variety of factors, the most important being that the United States has been able to absorb and assimilate higher numbers of immigrants more successfully than most European nations. This is a tangible result of America being a nation of immigrants. It is also because American is a union of states, with some pronounced regional differences that amount to little more than friendly rivalries. The European Union is a collection of nation-states, with long and complex histories that includes frequent armed conflicts between them. The success of the European Union is extraordinary *because* of this history, and it is Panglossian to dismiss World War II and the Cold War as ancient history, especially given the tense relation between NATO and Russia over the war in Ukraine.

Moving forward, will citizens of European Union countries increasingly see themselves as residents of an economic bloc united in their pursuit of continual GDP growth and a constant worker-to-retiree ratio? Or will they reevaluate immigration and population policies based on other national considerations?

This isn't to argue that competent national leaders who share a vision of the common good with the citizens they are elected to represent cannot navigate the challenges facing Europe. It is to suggest that this description doesn't seem to fit the situation in many European nations, particularly in Western Europe. What citizens demand, what politicians promise, and what governments deliver are quite often very different things.³⁰

Conclusion

Mass immigration has many consequences. Far-reaching ones. Of course, immigration has brought benefits to America; very few Americans would contest that. Support for continued but better regulated immigration is what Americans are asking for. Implementing and enforcing policies that effectively limit immigration remains difficult because the U.S. environmental movement, one of the most influential political forces in 20th Century American politics, abandoned its commitment to population stabilization.

The old mantra of the American environmental movement, “Think globally, act locally,” no longer applies. Mainstream environmentalism now has little to do

³⁰ FINANCIAL TIMES 2023.

with the conservation of natural resources or protecting open spaces from further development beyond the designation of state or national parkland that become overcrowded attractions for tourists desperate to experience the natural world. The United States can continue to grow its population indefinitely the “experts” tell us, as long as we somehow offset our expanding carbon footprint. But planting trees in the Amazon won’t stop runoff into the Chesapeake Bay or keep the Ogallala Aquifer from running dry. Those who have tasked themselves with solving change, at least those who control the levers of power, take the position that the best solution is to allow unfettered migration to the developed world. Those who live in the receiving countries have no say in the matter. This does not seem like a sustainable solution.

Bibliography

- BECK, Roy – KOLANCKIEWICZ, Leon (2000): *The Environmental Movement's Retreat From Advocating U.S. Population Stabilization (1970–1998): A First Draft of History*. Source: <https://www.agoregon.org/files/RetreatfromStabilization.pdf>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- BORJAS, George (2016): *We Wanted Workers: Unraveling the Immigration Narrative*. Source: New York: W.W. Norton.
- CAFARO, Philip – DÉRER, Patrícia (2019): *Policy-based Population Projections for the European Union: A Complementary Approach*. 28 Oct. 2019. Source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347240536_Policy-based_Population_Projections_for_the_European_Union_A_Complementary_Approach. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- CBS NEWS (2024): *Biden administration has admitted more than 1 million migrants into U.S. under parole policy Congress is considering restricting*. 22 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/immigration-parole-biden-administration-1-million-migrants/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES (2019): *Projecting the Impact of Immigration on the U.S. Population A look at size and age structure through 2060*. 4 Feb. 2019. Source: <https://cis.org/Report/Projecting-Impact-Immigration-US-Population>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES (2022): *Estimating the Illegal Immigrant Population Using the Current Population Survey*. 29 March 2022. Source: <https://cis.org/Report/Estimating-Illegal-Immigrant-Population-Using-Current-Population-Survey>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES (2023a): *New Census Bureau Projections Show Immigration Drives Population Growth*. 9 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://cis.org/Report/New-Census-Bureau-Projections-Show-Immigration-Drives-Population-Growth>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES (2023b): *In October 2023, the Foreign-Born Share Was the Highest in History*. 30 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://cis.org/Report/October-2023-ForeignBorn-Share-Was-Highest-History>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- COMMISSION ON POPULATION GROWTH AND THE AMERICAN FUTURE (1972): *Population and the American Future*. 27 March 1972. Source: https://population-security.org/rockefeller/001_population_growth_and_the_american_future.htm#Letter%20of%20Transmittal. Accessed on 20 March 2024.

- CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE (2013): *S. 744: Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act*. 18 June 2013. Source: <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/44346>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE (2024): *The Demographic Outlook: 2024 to 2054*. 18 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/59697>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- EUROSTAT (2024a): *Population Projections*. Source: [hhttps://www.cbo.gov/publication/59697](https://www.cbo.gov/publication/59697). Accessed on 20. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- EUROSTAT (2023b): *Population projections at national level (2022-2100): Population on 1st January by age, sex and type of projection*. Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography/population-projections/database>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- FINANCIAL TIMES (2023): *UK net migration has more than doubled from pre-Brexit levels, figures set to show*. 21 May 2023. Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/d06d83e6-15db-4f47-a080-a8d4d2c2e6e8>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- GALLUP (2023): *Nearly 900 Million Worldwide Wanted to Migrate in 2021*. 24 Jan. 2023. Source: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/468218/nearly-900-million-worldwide-wanted-migrate-2021.aspx>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- GALLUP (2024): *Gallup Poll Social Series: Mood of the Nation*. Feb. 2024. Source: <https://news.gallup.com/file/poll/611138/240226MIPEcon.pdf>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- HARVARD CAPS/HARRIS POLL (2018): *Harvard CAPS/Harris Poll*. Source: https://harvardharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/January-Report_full_MJP.pdf. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- HARVARD CAPS/HARRIS POLL (2024): *Immigration*. Source: <https://harvardharrispoll.com/tag/immigration/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- KAMMER, Jerry (2018): *A Brief Chronology of the Sierra Club's Retreat from the Immigration- Population Connection*. 14 Aug. 2018. Source: <https://cis.org/Immigration-Studies/Brief-Chronology-Sierra-Clubs-Retreat-ImmigrationPopulation-Connection-Updated>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- MACDONALD, Christine (2008): *Green, Inc.: An Environmental Insider Reveals How a Good Cause Has Gone Bad*. Source: Lanham, Maryland: Lyons Press.
- MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE (2019): *Unauthorized Immigrant Population Profiles*. Jan. 2021. Source: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/us-immigration-policy-program-data-hub/unauthorized-immigrant-population-profiles>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.

- NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (2017): *The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration*. Source: <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/23550/the-economic-and-fiscal-consequences-of-immigration>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- NEW YORK POST (2024): *DHS secretary admits over 85% of migrants are being allowed into US: report*. 9 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://nypost.com/2024/01/09/news/dhs-secretary-admits-over-85-of-migrants-being-allowed-into-us-report/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- NUMBERSUSA (2022): *From Sea to Sprawling Sea: Quantifying the Loss of Open Space in America*. March 2022. Source: <https://sprawlusa.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NatlSprawl.pdf>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- NUMBERSUSA (2023): *Californicating Idaho: Population and Sprawl Come to the Northern Rockies*. Dec. 2023. Source: https://idahospawl.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023_Idaho_Sprawl.pdf. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- PEW RESEARCH CENTER (2015): *Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065: Views of Immigration’s Impact on U.S. Society Mixed*. 28 Sept. 2015. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- PEW RESEARCH CENTER (2023): *What we know about unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S.* 16 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/11/16/what-we-know-about-unauthorized-immigrants-living-in-the-us/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, TASK FORCE REPORT (1996): *Task Force Report, “Population and Consumption,” Executive Summary*. Source: https://clintonwhitehouse3.archives.gov/PCSD/Publications/TF_Reports/pop-exec.html. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- RASMUSSEN REPORTS (2024): *Rasmussen Report: Immigration Index*. 23 Feb. 2024. Source: https://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/immigration_index/immigration_index_feb23. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- SELECT COMMISSION (1981): *Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy*. Source: <https://archive.org/details/finalreportofsel1981unit/page/n11/mode/2up>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (2023): *The 2023 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds*. 31 March 2023. Source:

- <https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/TR/2023/tr2023.pdf>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- TESTIMONY OF BARBARA JORDAN (1994): *Testimony of Barbara Jordan before the House Judiciary Committee*. 29 Sept. 1994. Source: <https://www.numbersusa.com/testimony-of-barbara-jordan-before-the-house-judiciary-committee-august-3-1994-2/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- THE ATLANTIC (2013): *The Little Group Behind the Big Fight to Stop Immigration Reform*. 1 Aug. 2013. Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/08/the-little-group-behind-the-big-fight-to-stop-immigration-reform/278252/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION (2019): *How many undocumented immigrants are in the United States and who are they*. 12 Nov. 2019. Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-many-undocumented-immigrants-are-in-the-united-states-and-who-are-they/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- THE NEW YORK TIMES (2021): *Biden Aims to Rebuild and Expand Legal Immigration*. 31 May 2021. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/31/us/politics/biden-immigration.html>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- THE NEW YORK TIMES (2023): *After Racial Reckoning, Sierra Club Looks Ahead with New Leadership*. 24 Jan. 2023. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/24/climate/ben-jealous-sierra-club.html>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- THE SEATTLE TIMES (2000): *Immigration's Direct Effect on Environment*. 15 June 2000. Source: <https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/?date=20000615&slug=4026721>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- THE WASHINGTON TIMES (2021): *Overpopulation is Biggest Environmental Threat*. 28 Feb. 2021. Source: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/feb/28/leon-kolankiewicz-overpopulation-biggest-environment/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis De (1835): *Democracy in America*.
- TURNER, Frederick Jackson (1893): *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*.
- U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (1975): *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*. Sept. 1975. Source: https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1975/compendia/hist_stats_colonial-1970.html. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2006): *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000*. 1 Feb. 2006. Source: <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2006/demo/POP-twps0081.html>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.

- U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2023a): *2023 National Population Projections Tables: Main Series, Projections of population size: Table 1: Projected Population and Components of Change*. Source: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj/tables/2023/2023-summary-tables/np2023-t1.xlsx>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2023b): *2023 National Population Projections Tables: High Immigration Scenario: Table 1: Projected Population and Components of Change*. Source: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/popproj/2023-alternative-summary-tables.html>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- U.S. COMMISSION ON IMMIGRATION REFORM (1997): *Becoming an American: Immigration and Immigrant Policy*. Source: <https://www.hsdl.org/c/view?docid=437705>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (2019): *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2015–January 2018*. Jan. 2019. Source: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/Pop_Estimate/UnauthImmigrant/unauthorized_immigrant_population_estimates_2015_-_2018.pdf. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (2022): *2022 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Source: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/2023_0818_plcy_yearbook_immigration_statistics_fy2022.pdf. Accessed on 20 March 2024.
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (2024): *Nationwide Encounters*. Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>. Accessed on 20. March 2024.
- WASHINGTON EXAMINER (2023): *The Border Report: Nearly 1.6 million ‘gotaways’ in U.S. since January 2021*. 28 Aug. 2023. Source: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/immigration/2580643/the-border-report-nearly-1-6-million-gotaways-in-u-s-since-january-2021/>. Accessed on 20 March 2024.

Integration and demographic challenges in France: an overview

Nicolas Pouvreau-Monti

Abstract

As one of the first countries in Europe to have experienced substantial non-European immigration, France can be considered as a relevant study case to comprehend issues related to economic and cultural integration of immigrants and their descendants, as well as the demographic challenges at stake. Indeed, the demographics of France are being rapidly transformed by immigration, due to the combined effect of two factors: the acceleration in migratory flows on the one hand, and the different birth rates among immigrants on the other. This paper assesses the impacts of those measurable trends on several aspects of French society: public finances, housing, wages, crime and delinquency, as well as broader social cohesion.

Keywords: demographic change, integration, birthrate, social cohesion, housing, wages, crime

Introduction

Early in the summer of 2023, European media were hit with footage of violent riots in France following the death of a young French-Algerian shot by a policeman after a hit-and-run offence. French public opinion widely understood these events as a striking sign of the failures of integration and immigration policies over the last decades. According to opinion polls, up to 74% of the French now say they agree with the idea that there are “too many immigrants” in France.¹

How did the country get to this point? Ultimately, the news footage of Paris burning offered a condensed picture of lingering social strife and tensions rooted in the (recent) past. Immigration is an undercurrent to much in public life in France today, and the 2023 incident was a flashpoint to forcibly bring the issues to the surface. Understanding the events is possible only through their contextualization in the current dynamics of immigration. Summarizing and analyzing the trends regarding both “first-generation” influxes and “second-generation” births on

¹ COHEN 2023.

French soil help appraise the impacts of immigration on several major fields of French social life, including crime and social cohesion.

Demographic winter

Along with the UK, France was among the first European countries to experience massive non-European immigration, beginning in the 1960s with mostly temporary labor migration. By the late 1970s, however, family reunification policies changed drastically both the scale and nature of non-European immigration. Coming mostly from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Turkey, the new arrivals settled down in the country. The dynamic thus established continues to this day.

To understand the full demographic impact of immigration, we have to look at it from a broader perspective: that of *demographic winter*.² This concept covers the stark reality of many developed countries in Europe: since the end of the post-WWII demographic revival (known as the baby boom), fertility levels have persistently stayed below the threshold for generational replacement, or 2.1 children per woman in countries with good health profiles.

This long-term decline in fertility in Europe has coincided with a strong population growth on the neighboring continent of Africa. The average fertility rate in Africa was 4.18 children per woman in 2023, double the level of population renewal. Twice as many children are born every year in Nigeria alone than in all the countries of the European Union combined.³ Having already doubled since 1990, the population of the African continent is expected to grow by another billion by 2050, from 1.4 to 2.4 billion,⁴ about half of whom will be under the age of 25.⁵

The result is a symmetrically reversed situation on the two sides of the Mediterranean Sea: the world's oldest continent (Europe) is face to face with the world's youngest continent (Africa). Today, 40% of the African population is under 15, compared to 16% in the European population. At the same time, almost 20% of the European population is aged 65 or over, compared to just 3.6% in the African population.⁶

² We owe this concept to Professor Gérard-François Dumont, geographer, economist, demographer and member of the Steering Committee of the *Observatoire de l'immigration et de la démographie*. OBSERVATOIRE DE L'IMMIGRATION ET DE LA DÉMOGRAPHIE 2021a.

³ For births in Nigeria, see INED 2022a. For births in the EU, see INSEE 2024a.

⁴ INED 2022b.

⁵ AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT 2019.

⁶ INSEE 2023a.

For a long time, France seemed to represent a relative exception among European nations, with a fertility level often close to the population replacement threshold. Unfortunately, the Western European nation no longer has this reassurance: the total fertility rate in France fell from 2.03 children per woman in 2010 to 1.68 last year. 2023's natural balance, i.e. the difference between live births and deaths, reached the lowest level since 1946 (+47,000, i.e. virtually zero), a rate that is a sixth of that recorded in 2006.⁷

However, it is important to emphasize that *demographic winter* as an umbrella term for France conceals very different realities, contrasting trends even, depending on the population segment. This is particularly true when we look at the breakdown of births by the parents' place of birth. If we take the year 2000 as our chronological reference point:

Between 2000 and 2022, the annual number of births to couples where both parents were born in France fell by 22% – almost by a quarter; during the same period, births to couples where at least one parent was born outside the EU rose by 40%, and those to both parents born outside the EU rose by 72%.⁸

This means that we are observing contradictory fertility dynamics: the native birth rate is contracting sharply, while the birth rate from non-EU immigrants is increasing very significantly. This is reflected in the distribution of births in 2022: almost a third (29%) of all children born in France that year had at least one parent born outside the European Union.⁹

To make sense of these facts, it is important to understand the combined effect of two explanatory factors: the acceleration in migratory flows on the one hand, and the different birth rates among immigrants on the other.

Explanatory factor: migratory flow acceleration

Let us start with the acceleration in migratory flows which can be seen in a number of indicators¹⁰. Between 1997 and 2023, the annual number of first residence permits issued by France increased by 172%. The year 2023 marked a new record in this respect, with 323,000 first residence permits granted. By definition, these

⁷ INSEE 2024b.

⁸ INSEE 2023b.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ OBSERVATOIRE DE L'IMMIGRATION ET DE LA DÉMOGRAPHIE 2024.

residence permits concern people from countries outside the European Economic Area. It should be pointed out that this total does not include the British (who had to regularize their situation after Brexit) or Ukrainians in 2022 (who have temporary European protection status). Neither does it include immigrants below the age of 18 who are not required to hold a residence permit.

In total, under Emmanuel Macron's presidency almost 2 million first residence permits have been granted since 2017 to immigrants from outside Europe (EU/Switzerland/UK). This is also a record. Admittedly, not all immigrants with such permits will settle permanently in France. However, INSEE tells us that, on average, for each immigrant leaving France, more than 4 have settled in the country over the last fifteen years. Also on average, the annual number of first residence permits granted under Emmanuel Macron has been 26% higher than under François Hollande and 45% higher than under Nicolas Sarkozy, his two predecessors in the presidency.

The breakdown of new residence permits according to nationality has remained unchanged in recent years: most applicants are from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, with a number of Sub-Saharan countries also featuring prominently.

There are additional instruments that allow us to approach the amplification of migratory flows in France. One of these is of course the dynamics of asylum: between 2009 and 2023, the annual number of first-time asylum applications lodged in France rose by 245%. The country received 42,000 in 2009 and 145,000 in 2023.¹¹ The five main countries of origin represented in the applications registered in 2023 were Afghanistan, Guinea, Turkey, Ivory Coast and Bangladesh.

According to Eurostat, a total of 825,000 first asylum applications have been registered in France under Emmanuel Macron's presidency since 2017.¹² This is a record number. The acceptance rate for asylum applications is now a little over 40%. However, even if the majority of applicants have their asylum request denied, 96% of the people rejected end up staying on French territory undocumented, according to the *Cour des Comptes*, the highest public audit institution in France.¹³

We could also talk about illegal immigration which by its nature is difficult to explore with precision, but whose upward trend can be observed through proxy indicators such as the recipients of *Aide médicale d'État* (AME), a state medical aid reserved specifically for illegal immigrants. Over the 18 years between 2004 and

¹¹ EUROSTAT 2024.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ COUR DES COMPTES 2015, 8.

2022, the number of AME beneficiaries increased by 165%,¹⁴ which attests to the more global trend in illegal immigration. The majority of registered beneficiaries come from Africa. The overall number of immigrants residing on French soil illegally is estimated between 700,000 and 900,000 by the French Ministry of the Interior. In their 2018 parliamentary report, MPs Kokouendo and Cornut-Gentile estimated that the number of illegal immigrants residing in the district of Seine-Saint-Denis (located in the northeast of Greater Paris) alone was between 150,000 and 400,000¹⁵ – which is the equivalent of a quarter of the “official” population of the area.

The acceleration in migratory flows has thus been clearly established.

Explanatory factor: birth rates in immigrant populations

According to a 2019 study that was based on birth rate data for 2014,¹⁶ Algerian immigrant women in France had an average of 3.69 children. This was not only double of the figures for non-immigrant women, but also significantly more than the fertility rate (3 children) of Algerian women residing in Algeria. The same differential applied to Tunisian, Moroccan and Turkish immigrant women: their fertility rate was between 3.12 and 3.5 children in France, whereas in their countries of origin it stayed between 2.1 and 2.4 children per woman.

Demographic studies indicate that the fertility rates of immigrants tend to fall in the next generation and gradually converge towards the average for native-born people. However, this convergence is slow, and its effects are greatly mitigated by the continuation and acceleration of new inflows. An INSEE study published at the beginning of 2023¹⁷ focused on the distribution of births among immigrant women according to the time passed since their first arrival in France. The findings were clear: the peak in the number of births occurs in the first year after the immigrant women’s arrival. It remains at a particularly high level for the next five years, then gradually declines. We might postulate that some women delay pregnancy until their immigration plans have succeeded, after which the support services offered in France encourage them to continue along this fertility path.

¹⁴ MINISTÈRE DE L’ÉCONOMIE ET DES FINANCES 2024.

¹⁵ CORNUT – GENTILE – KOKOUENDO 2018, 22.

¹⁶ HERAN – VOLANT – PISON 2019.

¹⁷ REYNAUD 2023.

The impact of these births could be seen in the demographic upheaval in the country's towns and cities, as illustrated by the data mapped by France Stratégie, a public agency related to the Prime Minister's office.¹⁸ Let us take the examples of two medium-size cities far from Paris.

In the city of Rennes and its metropolitan area, the proportion of the 0-18 population born to non-European immigrant parents multiplied by three between 1990 and 2017, increasing from 7.7% to 22.8%. By 2017, this group represented the majority in some of the city's neighborhoods – for example, in Le Blosne 51% of the 0-18 years old were children of non-European immigrants.

In Limoges, which is the main city of the very rural area of Limousin, the share of children born to non-European immigrants (one or both parents) in the 0-18 age group rose from 10.2% to 27.5% between 1990 and 2017 – a nearly threefold increase. By 2017, this group became the majority in some neighborhoods – for example, in Les Portes Ferrées 61% of the 0-18 years old were children of non-European immigrants.

Whither integration?

In light of the fast and unprecedented demographic shift that France is currently experiencing as a result of mass immigration, questions about the difficulties of integration generated by such flows undoubtedly arise. Let us mention only five areas where the challenges are most pressing: finance, housing, wages, crime, and cohesion.

1. The impact on public finances

Recent studies by the OECD¹⁹ and a French government agency²⁰ estimate the net cost (costs minus contributions) of immigration, including the impact of the first generation of immigrants' children as well as the immigrants themselves, to stand between 1.41 and 1.64 GDP points, or 35 and 40 billion euros per year.

¹⁸ OBSERVATOIRE DE L'IMMIGRATION ET DE LA DÉMOGRAPHIE 2021b.

¹⁹ OECD 2021, Chapter 4.

²⁰ CHOJNICKI – RAGOT – SOKHNA 2018.

This is due to several factors, including very high levels of unemployment and inactivity. More specifically, based on the most recent data available:²¹

41.6% of Algerians aged over 15 living in France were unemployed or inactive in 2017, a rate three times higher than that of the French;

42.7% of Moroccans were unemployed or inactive, a rate three times higher than that of the French;

47.6% of Turks were unemployed or inactive.

Nor does the issue get resolved with the next generation: the 2022 unemployment rate for people born to parents coming from Africa or Turkey was 2.5–3 times higher than among those of native French descent.²²

2. The impact on housing

In 2019–2020,²³ 57% of Sahelian African (Mali, Niger, etc.) immigrants in France lived in social housing, as did 63% of their descendants – a rate 6 times higher than for French people with no migratory ancestry. This was also the case for half of the immigrants from Algeria, Guinea and Central Africa, and 44% of Moroccan and Tunisian immigrants, compared to just 8% of Chinese immigrants.

3. The impact on native wages

Reporting findings from France, a recent academic study²⁴ demonstrates that a 1% increase in the number of workers due to immigration reduces the wages of unskilled native labor by almost 1% on average. It also reduces the wages of technicians and white-collar workers by 0.42%, and those of skilled workers by 0.33%. There is a slight positive salary effect, but it benefits only managers for whose jobs there tends to be little competition from immigrants in France because their skill levels are lower than in other Western countries.

Indeed, 34.9% of immigrants living in France in 2022 had no qualifications beyond elementary education. This rate of unqualified individuals was 2.5 times higher than the 14.2% observed among people with no migratory ancestry.²⁵

²¹ Data were supplied by INSEE. MINISTÈRE DE L'INTÉRIEUR 2020.

²² INSEE 2023c.

²³ INSEE 2023d.

²⁴ ORTEGA – VERDUGO 2021.

²⁵ INSEE 2022.

There are significant cross-group differences depending on migratory origin. In 2022, the proportion of people with no qualifications was 37.9% among immigrants from Africa in general, 54.1% among people from Sahelian Africa, and 38.4% among immigrants from the Maghreb. The figure was 54.4% for Turkey.

4. *The impact on crime and delinquency*

While foreigners (excluding dual citizens) made up 7.8% of France’s population in 2022,²⁶ they accounted for 25% of prison inmates²⁷ – a representation 3 times over their demographic weight, and a 4-point increase in six years.

Algerians are the most heavily represented among foreign nationals incarcerated in France: with 20.6% in January 2022, they outnumbered the imprisoned citizens from all EU countries combined. Algerians were followed by nationals of African countries outside the Maghreb (17.2%), Moroccans (12.5%), and Tunisians (6.9%).²⁸

On January 31, 2024, the *Service statistique ministériel de la sécurité intérieure* (data department of the Ministry of the Interior) published a document titled “Unsafety and delinquency in 2023: a first snapshot”²⁹ based on delinquency incidents recorded by the national police and gendarmerie forces. The ministry’s statistical service emphasizes in its summary that the implicated profiles are “younger on average than the French population, and more often of foreign nationality”. In fact, for all offenses combined, 17% of the perpetrators are foreign nationals – excluding those with dual nationality. This proportion is more than twice as high as the group’s share of the general population as measured by INSEE (7.8%).³⁰ The over-representation can be as much as four to five times higher for certain categories of offense, with strong growth in recent years: foreigners account for 40% of suspects for theft from vehicles (up 22 points on 2016), 38% for burglary (up 12 points), 31% for violent theft without weapons (up 10 points).³¹ Even more enlightening, the database available for offenses committed on public transport enables us to distinguish between foreign defendants according to the nationality group to which they belong. Foreign nationals from African countries – including

²⁶ INSEE 2023d.

²⁷ MINISTÈRE DE LA JUSTICE 2023, 24.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ SSMSI 2024.

³⁰ INSEE 2023f.

³¹ SSMSI 2024.

the Maghreb and excluding those with dual nationality – represent 3.5% of France’s population, according to INSEE. In 2023, they accounted for 39% of suspects in transport offenses (13 points more than in 2016), i.e. eleven times more than their “normal” demographic weight.³²

5. *The impact on cultural cohesion*

According to opinion polls, 67% of French people are worried about the prospect of a “great replacement”,³³ a notion referring to a potential demographic overwhelming of native French and European people by non-European immigrants and their descendants. Considering how widely shunned the concept is in mainstream public spheres, this result shows how deep-seated the public’s concerns are about the scale and pace of demographic change in the country. Such unease tends to focus on Islam, as France now has the largest Muslim population in Europe due to immigration. The community keeps growing, and on average it is significantly younger than the Christian population.

Around 1 in 5 newborn boys in France are now given a Muslim first name. Islamic veil is a particularly visible marker of the trend. Between 2008-2009 and 2019-2020, the share of Muslim women who veil rose by half.³⁴ Muslim women who do not wear veils now feel more and more social pressure in some Islamic neighborhoods to start wearing it.

Today’s migratory acceleration keeps transforming France’s religious landscape. In 2021, nationals of Muslim-majority countries accounted for 72% of people benefiting from a first residence permit.³⁵ In 2022, nationals of Muslim-majority countries accounted for 61% of first-time asylum seekers in France.³⁶ The continuing growth of migratory flows thus contributes to reinforcing the demographics of Muslim populations in France.

³² Ibid.

³³ The question was part of a survey conducted by the polling agency Harris Interactive for *Challenges* magazine. Aware of the sensitivity of the issue, the magazine’s editorial team and the pollster published the question in its entirety. Its precise wording was, “Some people talk about the great replacement: “European, white and Christian populations being threatened with extinction following Muslim immigration from the Maghreb and black Africa.” Do you think that such a phenomenon will occur in France?” DE MENTHON 2021.

³⁴ INSEE 2023g.

³⁵ The Observatoire de l’immigration et de la démographie (OID) calculated the share of Muslim-majority countries from INED 2024 data.

³⁶ Ofpra 2023. Calculating the share of Muslim-majority countries was done by the OID.

Conclusions

This analysis gave readers an overview of the major migratory and demographic trends at work in France, along with the reasons why these trends are undermining public trust in democracy. If their “natural” evolution proceeds unchecked, they are bound to continue growing in the same directions. On the other hand, if political choices are made to redirect some of these trends, the scenario will obviously be much more open.

To make strong political choices in the field of immigration has become difficult, due to the heavy constraints put on policymakers both by national case law and various international treaties – especially those that form today’s EU and ECHR law. Particularly important for this discussion are the major immigration channels that have been largely removed from the field of standard democratic deliberation. The first one is family-based immigration, which has been on average the most frequent motive for first-issued residence permits in France over the last 10 years.³⁷ It is heavily protected by Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) sanctuarizing the “right to private and family life.” The other is asylum-claiming immigration, whose dynamic is currently the most striking. It derives from the 1951 Geneva convention on the status of refugees, and French judges have been growing ever laxer in their interpretation of the convention.

Should the need arise to recover room for maneuvering on immigration policies, those two legal fields should certainly be prime subject matters for political decision-making. As evidence covered in this paper suggests, there is such a need indeed.

³⁷ INED 2024.

Bibliography

- AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT (2019): By 2050, more than half of Africa's population will be under 25 years old. 4 Jun 2019. Source: <https://www.afd.fr/en/actualites/2050-more-half-africas-population-will-be-under-25-years-old>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- CHOJNICKI, Xavier – RAGOT, Lionel – SOKHNA, Ndeye-Penda (2018): L'impact budgétaire de 30 ans d'immigration en France. *CEPII Document de travail* N° 2018-04. Avr. 2018. Source: http://www.cepii.fr/PDF_PUB/wp/2018/wp2018-04.pdf. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- COHEN, Dinah (2023): Immigration: les Français soutiennent largement les propositions formulées par LR. *Le Figaro*. 24 May 2023. Source: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/immigration-les-francais-soutiennent-largement-les-propositions-formulees-par-lr-20230524>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- CORNUT-GENTILE, François – KOKOUENDO, Rodrigue (2018): Rapport d'information sur l'évaluation de l'action de l'Etat en Seine-Saint-Denis. 31 May 2018. Source: https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/cec/l15b1014_rapport-information.pdf. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- COUR DES COMPTES (2015): L'accueil et l'hébergement des demandeurs d'asile, référé n°S 2015 0977 1. 30 July 2015. Source: <https://www.ccomptes.fr/sites/default/files/EzPublish/20151008-refere-S201509771-accueil-hebergement-demandeurs-asile.pdf>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- DE MENTHON, Pierre-Henri (2021): 67% des Français s'inquiètent d'un "grand remplacement". *Challenges* 21 Oct. 2021. Source: https://www.challenges.fr/politique/67-des-francais-s-inquietent-d-un-grand-remplacement_785793. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- EUROSTAT (2024): Demandeurs et primo-demandeurs d'asile. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYDCFSTQ__custom_1238672/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=7183f1ad-8f6d-43f4-a8c9-518a71313ed7. Accessed on 1 Feb. 2024.
- HERAN, François – VOLANT, Sabrina – PISON, Gilles (2019): La France a la plus forte fécondité d'Europe. Est-ce dû aux immigrés? *INED Population & Sociétés* n°568, July/Aug. 2019. Source: <https://www.ined.fr/fr/publications/editions/population-et-societes/france-plus-forte-fecondite-europe-immigrees/>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.

- INED (2022a): Afrique occidentale – Estimations 2024. Source: https://www.ined.fr/en/everything_about_population/data/world-projections/projections-by-countries/. Accessed on 21 May 2024.
- INED (2022b): Projections par continent – Projections mondiales – Les chiffres. Oct. 2022. Source: <https://www.ined.fr/fr/tout-savoir-population/chiffres/projections-mondiales/projections-par-continent/>. Accessed on 21 May 2024.
- INED (2024): Titres de séjour par nationalité – Bénéficiaires d’un premier titre de séjour d’un an et plus pour les nationalités les plus importantes en 2021. Feb. 2024. Source: <https://www.ined.fr/fr/tout-savoir-population/chiffres/france/flux-immigration/titres-de-sejour-par-nationalite/>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- INSEE (2022): Niveau de diplôme des immigrés et descendants d’immigrés par origine géographique – Données annuelles 2022. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4187349>. Accessed on 21 May 2024.
- INSEE (2023a): Population et structure par âge dans le monde – Données annuelles. 20 Feb. 2023. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2381482>. Accessed on 21 May 2024.
- INSEE (2023b): Naissances selon la nationalité et le pays de naissance des parents – Données annuelles de 1998 à 2022. 28 Sept. 2023. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2381382>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- INSEE (2023c): Inactivité, chômage et emploi des immigrés et des descendants d’immigrés par origine géographique. Données annuelles 2022. 5 July 2023. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4195420>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- INSEE (2023d): Immigrés et descendants d’immigrés – Conditions de logement. 30 Mar. 2023. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6793286?sommaire=6793391>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- INSEE (2023e): L’essentiel sur... les immigrés et les étrangers. 10 July 2023. Source: <https://www.herodote.net/Textes/insee-immigres.pdf>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- INSEE (2023f): Population immigrée et étrangère en France – Données annuelles de 1921 à 2022. 5 July 2023. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2381757>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- INSEE (2023g): La diversité religieuse en France: transmissions intergénérationnelles et pratiques selon les origines. 30 Mar. 2023. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6793308?sommaire=6793391>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- INSEE (2024a): Natalité et fécondité dans l’Union européenne – Données annuelles de 1999 à 2022. 01 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2381396>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.

- INSEE (2024b): Tableau de bord de l'économie française - Nombre de naissances, de décès et solde naturel. 16 Jan. 2024. Source: https://www.insee.fr/fr/outil-interactif/5367857/details/20_DEM/21_POP/21E_Figure5. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉCONOMIE ET DES FINANCES (2024): *Projet annuel de performance annexé à la mission budgétaire Santé*. Source: <https://www.budget.gouv.fr/documentation/documents-budgetaires/exercice-2024/le-projet-de-loi-de-finances-et-les-documents-annexes-pour-2024>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- MINISTÈRE DE L'INTÉRIEUR (2020): L'immigration en France – Données du recensement 2017. 29 Sept. 2020. Source: <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Actualites/Focus/L-immigration-en-France-donnees-du-recensement-2017>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- MINISTÈRE DE JUSTICE (2023): Séries statistiques des personnes placées sous main de justice: 1980-2022. », p. 24 https://www.justice.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-04/PPSMJ_2022_vf.pdf
- OBSERVATOIRE DE L'IMMIGRATION ET DE LA DÉMOGRAPHIE (2021a): Grand entretien: Gérard-François Dumont et l'hiver démographique européen. 24 Aug. 2021. Source: <https://observatoire-immigration.fr/grand-entretien-gerard-francois-dumont-et-lhiver-demographique-europeen/>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- OBSERVATOIRE DE L'IMMIGRATION ET DE LA DÉMOGRAPHIE (2021b): Immigration et démographie urbaine: ce que nous apprennent les cartes de France Stratégie. 25 Aug. 2021. Source: <https://observatoire-immigration.fr/immigration-et-demographie-urbaine-ce-que-nous-apprennent-les-cartes-de-france-strategie/>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- OBSERVATOIRE DE L'IMMIGRATION ET DE LA DÉMOGRAPHIE (2024): Bilan migratoire de la présidence Macron: une immigration qui poursuit son accélération en 2023. 25 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://observatoire-immigration.fr/immigration-2023/>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- OECD (2021): *Perspectives des migrations internationales 2021*. 28 Oct. 2021. Source: <https://doi.org/10.1787/da2bbd99-fr>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- OFPPRA (2023): Rapport d'activité 2022. 3 July 2023. Source: https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/2023-07/OFPPRA_RA_2022_WEB%20-%20m%C3%A0j%2007.pdf. Accessed on 23 May 2024.
- ORTEGA, JAVIER – VERDUGO, GRÉGORY (2021): Who stays and who leaves? Immigration and the selection of natives across locations. *Sciences Po OFCE Working Paper n° 20/2021*. Source: <https://www.ofce.fr>

sciences-po.fr/pdf/dtravail/OFCEWP2021-20.pdf. Accessed on 23 May 2024.

REYNAUD, Didier (2023). Combien les femmes immigrées ont-elles d'enfants?. *INSEE Première n°1939*. 23 Feb. 2023. Source: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6801884>. Accessed on May 23 2024.

SSMSI (2024): Insécurité et délinquance en 2023, une première photographie. *Interstats Analyse n°64*. 31 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Interstats/Actualites/Insecurite-et-delinquance-en-2023-une-premiere-photographie-Interstats-Analyse-n-64>. Accessed on 23 May 2024.

The Gateway or the Bastion? Tunisia's role in stemming the flow of Europe-bound migration

Sára Kmeckó

Abstract

A research team from the Migration Research Institute carried out fieldwork in October 2023 in Malta, Italy and Tunisia in order to gain a better understanding of the intensity of migratory pressure on the Central Mediterranean migration route. This analysis presents the findings from the Tunisian part of the fieldwork. It offers an overview of the traditional external markets of Tunisian labour, and it touches on past eras when Tunisia served as host to western guest labourers. The analysis then surveys the development of irregular migration from Tunisia to Europe, along with the cooperation between the North African country and the European Union on issues of migration. It discusses the main characteristics of Tunisia's migration policies and the changes that occurred in the wake of the post-2011 democratisation processes. Finally, it covers key data about irregular migration originating from Tunisia.

Keywords: Tunisia, European Union, migration, Central Mediterranean, gatekeeper states

Tunisian guest workers in Europe, European guest workers in Tunisia

Gaining independence from France in 1956, Tunisia has been a sender country in global migration. The primary external labour markets of Tunisia were traditionally Libya and EU member states, while the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and North America presented their secondary markets.¹ In the 1960s, the North African country signed bilateral treaties with multiple Western European countries (including France, Germany, Italy,² and the Netherlands), which

¹ AWAD – SELIM 2015, 1.

² Tunisian workers in Italy were clustered primarily in Sicily. Their mobility can be considered one of the early waves of international migration to Italy. Tunisian workers first appeared on the economically backward island in the 1960s. During the same period, Sicily's population migrated

allowed Tunisian citizens visa-free entry and ease of seeking employment. As the Tunisian economy was unable to provide employment for a significant part of the labour force that was expanding with the country's population explosion, the state supported the international migration of Tunisian workers, especially because remittances contributed significantly to the livelihood of family members who stayed at home. The situation was also advantageous politically for its partial amelioration of socio-economic tensions.³

It is worth noting that the migration of foreign workers was not unilateral: Tunisia was also targeted by large numbers of workers from within and outside Europe. Between the 1880s and 1960s, several hundreds of thousands of Italian guest labourers found employment in Libya and Tunisia. In the 1930s, Tunisia was host to nearly 100,000 Italian citizens seeking more favourable economic prospects and higher standards of living, albeit their number was down to its third by the early 1960s. The significant drop initially occurred because of French measures targeting the local Italian community (France cited public security as the reason for expropriating Italian-owned public institutions, including schools and hospitals, without any compensation to the previous owners), then the decisions dictated by the politics of “decolonisation” in the newly independent Tunisia.⁴

Apart from Italians, Tunisia also hosted significant numbers of French, Libyan, and Algerian citizens.⁵ Thanks to a flourishing tourism industry, then the economic liberalisation unfolding in the wake of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) forced on the country by the World Bank and the IMF in the 1980s, Tunisia – like Morocco – was attracting increasing numbers of highly qualified European workers.⁶

The beginnings of irregular migration from Tunisia

The changes unfolding in European visa policies and border control in the wake of the ratification of the Schengen Agreement redirected highly qualified Tunisian

to the northern provinces of Italy in search of better jobs and higher standards of living. Out of Sicily's population of nearly five million today, 20,000 are of Tunisian origin who constitute the largest non-European local community on the island. FLERI 2022, 624 – 627.

³ HERBERT 2016, 3–4; DE BEL-AIR 2016, 1.

⁴ FAURI – STRANGIO 2020, 447–454, 457–459; FLERI 2022, 633–635.

⁵ NATTER 2023, 681.

⁶ It is hard to determine the precise number of European guest workers in Tunisia because many are staying in the country on a tourist visa. They likely number more than the data in official statistics suggest. NATTER 2023, p. 681.

citizens working abroad towards the labour markets of the wealthy Persian Gulf states. Nevertheless, Tunisians continued to be attracted to the favourable economic opportunities in Europe despite the restrictions placed on legal migration to the EU.⁷ The beginnings of irregular Tunisian migration to Europe can be attributed to the entrepreneurial eye of the drugs and arms trafficking networks active in the country's less developed, typically southern regions. Tunisian demand made smugglers spot an opportunity to diversify into human trafficking between Morocco and Spain, Tunisia and Italy, as well as Libya and Italy. Tunisia's illicit traders, who also cultivated close contacts with the Italian mafia, set up illegal migrant routes mainly between the Cap Bon peninsula in the north and Sicily, and between the central and southern governorates and the Pelagie Islands.⁸ The operation of the networks was aided by numerous local fishermen and boatmen whose excellent knowledge of the terrain helped deliver significant numbers of migrants to Italian shores. Although the services were primarily used by Tunisian citizens, the routes also enjoyed regional popularity as evidenced by the appearance of Moroccan and Algerian migrants.⁹ Since the Tunisian government showed only moderate interest in the situation, no real progress was made in stemming the flow of irregular migration from Tunisia to Italy.

Although in the beginning the illegal migration routes connecting North African states with the southern countries of Europe were utilised primarily by citizens of the former French colonies, by the beginning of the millennium the number of Sub-Saharan Africans crossing through there also grew significantly.¹⁰ This phenomenon made visible the inadequacies of the border security architecture of the region, as well as signalling that the area had become a migration transit zone.¹¹

It is worth noting, however, that at the same time the number of Sub-Saharans staying legally in Tunisia also started to grow. The growing presence was due on the one hand to the attraction of the network of newly established private universities in Tunisia, and on the other the temporary, 2003–2014 relocation of the headquarters of the African Development Bank (est. 1964) from Ivory Coast's Abidjan to Tunis. Large numbers of students from Sub-Saharan countries such as Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Senegal came to study at the new private universities under visa waiver programmes. Some of them found positions in different branches of Tunisia's informal sector over time. The relocation of the African Development

⁷ DE BEL-AIR 2016, 2.

⁸ The islands of Lampedusa, Lampione and Linosa.

⁹ HERBERT 2016, 3–4.

¹⁰ TRIANDAFYLIDOU – MAROUKIS 2012, 33.

¹¹ HANLON – HERBERT 2015, 9.

Bank headquarters to Tunis due to the civil war in Ivory Coast also involved the temporary resettling of several thousand highly qualified Sub-Saharan employees and their staff.¹² They were considered guests under President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's regime (1987–2011) that eased their arrival in Tunisia.¹³

Tunisia and the externalisation of European border control: successes and failures

Sensing the migration pressure from North Africa, southern European states, and Italy in particular, tried to strengthen cooperation with Tunisia and Libya. Tunisian president Ben Ali was open to expanding collaboration on migration issues in exchange for adequate political and financial support. Italy and Tunisia signed numerous bilateral treaties covering, among others, readmission agreements on illegal Tunisian citizens and third country nationals (TCN) in Italy, along with joint marine patrols by the two states. Similar to Morocco, Tunisia made human trafficking a criminal offense in 2004, and Tunisian authorities started taking more decisive action against trafficking networks operating in the country.¹⁴ Some “draconic”¹⁵ clauses of the amended law came under heavy criticism from human rights organisations, but the new immigration law was favourable to European countries and stayed in effect. The law strengthened the international legitimacy of the regime, and it gave the president a tool for even tighter surveillance¹⁶ of Tunisia's population in the vein he did with Tunisians employed in Western Europe. Supporting Tunisians in finding employment abroad, the state simultaneously exerted major efforts to monitor the Tunisian diaspora in western countries through a network controlled by the president's party. Within the framework of the 1995 Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Tunisia and European states agreed that the struggle against religious extremism is a “shared security interest.” Thus, the issue of battling Islamism enabled President Ben Ali to also surveil and control the political opposition living abroad.¹⁷

¹² NATTER 2023, 681.

¹³ NATTER 2018, 7.

¹⁴ HERBERT 2016, 4.

¹⁵ The new law penalised irregular migrants and those aiding them with fines of €4,800–60,000 or up to 20 years' imprisonment. Migrants captured could not appeal the authorities' decision, and even vulnerable groups (minors and pregnant women) were not exempt from expulsion. However, the state was unable to enforce its rules in every case, thus the application of the new immigration law remained inconsistent. NATTER 2023, 677, 683.

¹⁶ NATTER 2018, 11.

¹⁷ DINI – GIUSIA 2020, 25–27; DE BEL-AIR 2016, 1.

As a result of the upping of Tunisian efforts combating illegal migration and the establishment of the European border and coast guard agency Frontex, the volume of irregular migration from Tunisia to Italy decreased significantly. However, the Tunisian state failed to tackle the underlying causes of illegal migration, the social disaffection with the structural problems of the economy. One major outstanding issue was the chronic high unemployment that affected youth particularly. This problem could be traced back to the low economic capacity of added value production and the absence of attractive job opportunities.¹⁸

The uprising that broke out in Tunisia in December 2010 had numerous casualties but led to the fall of Ben Ali. The “Jasmine Revolution” also ended the efficient collaboration on migration between Tunisia and Europe whose security interests aligned with the terms of the cooperation. The series of protests that affected major cities but were eventually crushed by law enforcement agencies were provoked by the authoritarian model of government that relied heavily on state security, together with the chronically high unemployment rates that affected 30% of youth. With the collapse of the country’s system of border control, Tunisia could no longer pay much attention to curbing irregular migration targeting Europe. Many exploited the situation. In the first days of 2011, 48,000 irregular migrants were caught at Italian shores. There were 28,000 Tunisian citizens among them.¹⁹ The situation was further aggravated by the Libyan conflict that started in February 2011, resulting in the mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of expatriate workers, a portion of whom joined irregular migration flows heading towards Europe. According to estimates by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), during this period 722,000 expat workers departed from the western Tripolitania region of the oil-rich North African country. Due to geographical proximity, 313,000 of them left for Tunisia.²⁰ With the escalation of the Libyan situation, Tunisia also started receiving Libyan refugees, although no precise data concerning them is available to date.²¹

¹⁸ HERBERT, 2016, 4–5.

¹⁹ HERBERT 2022a, 6.

²⁰ The remaining crowd of 409,000 fled to Egypt, Niger and Chad. BOUBAKRI 2024, 112.

²¹ Their numbers are estimated between 8,000 and 800,000. The 2014 census recorded a mere 8,772 Libyan citizens in Tunisia, but the official data is far from reflecting the actual situation as most Libyans are staying in the country either illegally or on a tourist visa. Even conservative estimates put the number at half a million people at least, while other estimates talk about the presence of one or even 1.8 million. For geopolitical and financial reasons, Tunisian governments have not attempted to administratively settle the stay of Libyan refugees in Tunisia. On the one hand, the government’s interests dictate maintaining cordial ties with both Libyan governments. On the other, a significant group of the Libyans who settled down in Tunisia made financial contributions with substantial investments in various sectors. All of this helped Tunisian society to

Changing migration policies in Tunisia

Tunisia has traditionally considered itself a sender country of migrants, regardless of the long period in its history when they hosted significant numbers of foreigners, including many guest labourers. This situation remained unchanged by the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’ and its subsequent events, even though from the perspective of migration these strengthened the transit or receiver character of North African states. Unlike Tunisia, the other states in the region were spurred by regional processes to prominently feature migration as a problem on their political agenda. This was also manifest in their legislative processes.

Egypt ratified its ten-year strategy for curbing irregular migration in 2016.²² The strategy includes severe penalties, and the strict measures have proved effective so far, although it is uncertain how well the country that admitted 10 million migrants and refugees can keep its commitments in the future. The refugees and migrants in Egypt place a massive burden on the North African country’s social care system.²³

Morocco’s King Mohammed VI articulated in 2013 the goal of developing a comprehensive immigration policy that takes an integrated approach to interpreting migration and asylum. Executed through several steps, reforms serving to increase the international prestige and assert the geopolitical interests of the country also included the 2014 National Immigration and Asylum Policy, a strategic document that was the first of its kind for the country.²⁴ However, the monarchy’s tendency to proceed with caution is reflected in the fact that important elements of the reforms can only be executed by royal decree, thus they can be revoked at any time. In return, it has been possible to keep sensitive issues off the political agenda.²⁵

Tunisia to this day has not produced a similar government decision, although one of the outcomes expected from the democratisation processes²⁶ that started in

view them as “brothers” and “guests” of the country despite the Libyans’ lack of any official legal status. NATTER 2018, 7, 12; NATTER 2023, 681; KARASPASAN 2015; ROMAN – PASTORE 2018, 11.
²² SAYFO 2023, 5.

²³ MARSAL – N. RÓZSA 2023, 11–13.

²⁴ TÁRIK – TÓTH 2023, 3–4.

²⁵ NATTER 2023, 684–687.

²⁶ President Kais Saied has dismissed several prime ministers since his 2020 inauguration, and he first suspended, then dismissed parliament. In summer 2022, he expanded his presidential powers through the amendment of the 2014 constitution, which allowed him to set political directions more firmly. Several opposition politicians were arrested at the same time.

2011 and thus far have produced only dubious results was the development of the country's first national strategy on migration that would also consider humanitarian perspectives. The work begun in 2012 with the involvement of the European Union and NGOs was slowed down considerably by political factors both internal and foreign, and by today it has essentially stalled. Developing a unified strategy was complicated by the involvement of multiple actors in the document preparation process, unlike in previous times. On the one hand, lack of internal cooperation prevented post-2011 governments from coming up with a unified vision on the issue. Officials viewed the phenomenon of migration in general through different lenses, nor did they share a perspective about the relative ratios of related security risks and exploitable opportunities. In addition, the development of a national strategy was hindered by Tunisia's rejection of European Union expectations of the country taking on the task of guarding Europe's external borders. Adjusting to social expectations, post-2011 Tunisian leaders objected to becoming a gatekeeper state.²⁷ Rejecting these European efforts is a cornerstone of the migration-related mentality of democratically elected Tunisian governments whose position also reflects the attitude of Tunisian society.²⁸ It is important to note that while prior to 2011 migration – particularly irregular migration – was not a subject of domestic political debates, the situation has changed considerably since 2022.

The European Union and Tunisia signed a strategic treaty²⁹ in 2023 which also touched on migration, among other issues. The EU made no secret of its intention to make Tunisia a defender of its external borders in exchange for the € 1 billion financial support granted to the country suffering from an economic crisis. However, Tunisia would be unable to develop completely effective border controls even with a clever utilization of the promised financial support. On the one hand, their priorities reflect Tunisia's unfavourable social and economic situation that differs significantly from that of Europe. On the other, there is an *ab ovo* rejection of the gatekeeper role, accompanied by a questionable willingness to cooperate.³⁰ A significant part of Tunisian society believes that by signing the agreement in the summer Kais Saied only wanted to strengthen the legitimacy of his power, and the European financial support negotiated for is a tool serving this goal.³¹ The

²⁷ NATTER 2022, 2, 6–14; DINI – GIUSIA 2020, 42–48.

²⁸ Personal interview with a Tunisian sociologist and a local family, Tunis, October 2023.

²⁹ DE LEO 2023.

³⁰ It is a widely held view that Tunisian authorities have always turned a partial blind eye to the irregular migration of Tunisian citizens to Europe. The departure of mostly undereducated, typically young men lowered the chances of mass protests breaking out for social disaffection. Personal interview with a Tunisian sociologist, Tunis, October 2023.

³¹ Interview with a Tunisian sociologist, Tunis, October 2023.

difficulties of cooperation between the parties are indicated by Tunisia's September barring of the entry of the delegation from the foreign affairs committee of the European Parliament to continue its factfinding mission about the democratic transformations in the country.³² Furthermore, in early October the president rejected EU financial support because he believed it violated the agreement signed in July.³³ Against the initial hopes attached to the pact, the number of irregular migrants arriving at the shores of Italy from Tunisia has been growing steadily since 2019. What is more, in 2023 more people came from Tunisia than from neighbouring Libya.³⁴ It is thus conceivable that the two parties will be forced to renegotiate the agreement in the future.

Growing intensity of migration originating from Tunisia since 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic and the severe economic crisis it created, followed by the war in Ukraine, deepened the country's festering political, economic and social problems. As a result, the volume of irregular migration targeting Europe was amplified once more. Thus, irregular migration originating from Tunisia can be traced back to demographic explosion,³⁵ the absence of structural reforms in the economy³⁶ and the related high rates of unemployment³⁷, along with the long-standing fundamental reliance of the regime on internal security and intelligence services³⁸ (*mukhabharat* model of the state). Due to Tunisia's unresolved economic problems, the volume of irregular migration to Europe has been growing steadily since 2020.

2022 produced a new record in the number of irregular migrants arriving in Italy, higher than the data from 2011: while the migration wave provoked by the "Jasmine Revolution" saw 27,982 Tunisian citizens reach Italian shores illegally, the number grew to 32,371 in 2022. It is worth noting that while Tunisian irregular migrants

³² JONES 2023.

³³ MIDDLE EAST MONITOR 2023.

³⁴ MARTINI – MAGERISI 2023.

³⁵ Tunisia's population grew three-fold between 1960 and 2022, from 4 to 12 million. WORLD BANK 2022.

³⁶ ELDIN – SALIH 2013, 187.

³⁷ Due to the low rates of Tunisia's economic ability to produce added value, there were no attractive job prospects for young people. This led to continuing high unemployment rates of 13–16% that affected primarily the young generations. IMF 2010.

³⁸ LUTTERBECK 2015, FERWAGNER 2009, 70–71.

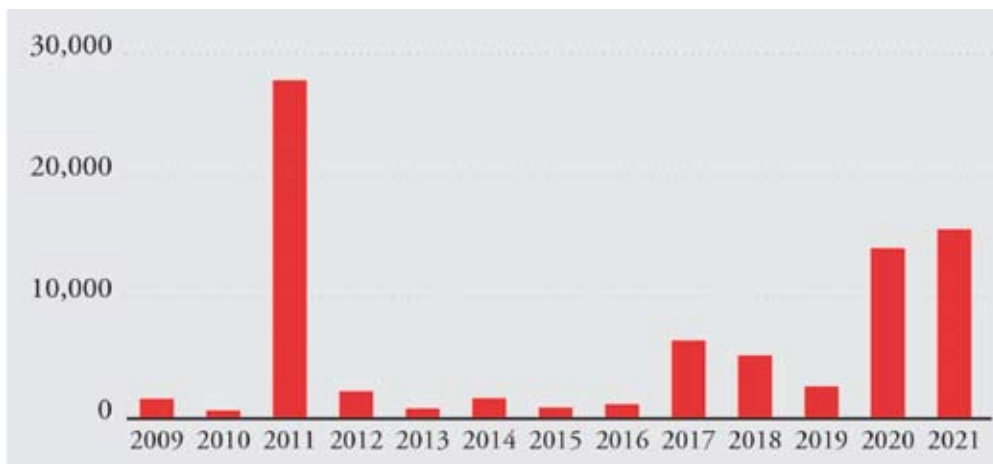


Figure 1. Irregular border crossings into Europe by Tunisian migrants on the Central Mediterranean route, 2009–2021.

arrived in Europe mainly on the Central Mediterranean route, by the end of 2022 more and more attempted to enter the European Union following a route in the West Balkans. Authorities captured a record 6,782 Tunisian migrants on this route in 2022.³⁹ However, after the Serbian government's November 2022 introduction of visa requirements for the citizens of multiple countries, the migration pressure on the West Balkans route eased considerably. The decision also had an impact on the number of irregular migrants from Tunisia.⁴⁰

The strengthening of the flow of irregular migration from the North African country can also be seen in the growing numbers of irregular migrants captured on the coastline by Tunisian security and defence forces. While the number of people caught was a mere 3,522 in 2017, in 2021 it was up to 23,328, then hitting between an estimated 29,732 and 38,713 migrants in 2022.⁴¹

The increase in the intensity of irregular migration from Tunisia also continued in 2023. The Central Mediterranean route saw significant growth in traffic, and irregular border crossing incidents rose to levels not seen since 2016. In the first 11 months of 2023, Frontex reported 152,211 irregular border crossings, a 61% year-on-year increase from 2022.⁴² As a consequence of the growing traffic along the Central Mediterranean route, the tendency for irregular migrants landing in Italy has also shown growth. According to UNHCR data, 85,282 irregular migrants

³⁹ ABDERRAHIM 2023, 13–14.

⁴⁰ FRONTEx 2023b, 16.

⁴¹ ABDERRAHIM 2023, 13–14.

⁴² FRONTEx 2023a.

came to Italy by sea in the first ten months of 2022. The same period in 2023 saw a 69% increase, with 144,098 arrivals. The breakdown of the 144,098 irregular migrants by nationality reveals that after Syrians and Bangladeshis, Tunisians were the third largest group to arrive in Italy illegally, with a total of 16,699 people.⁴³

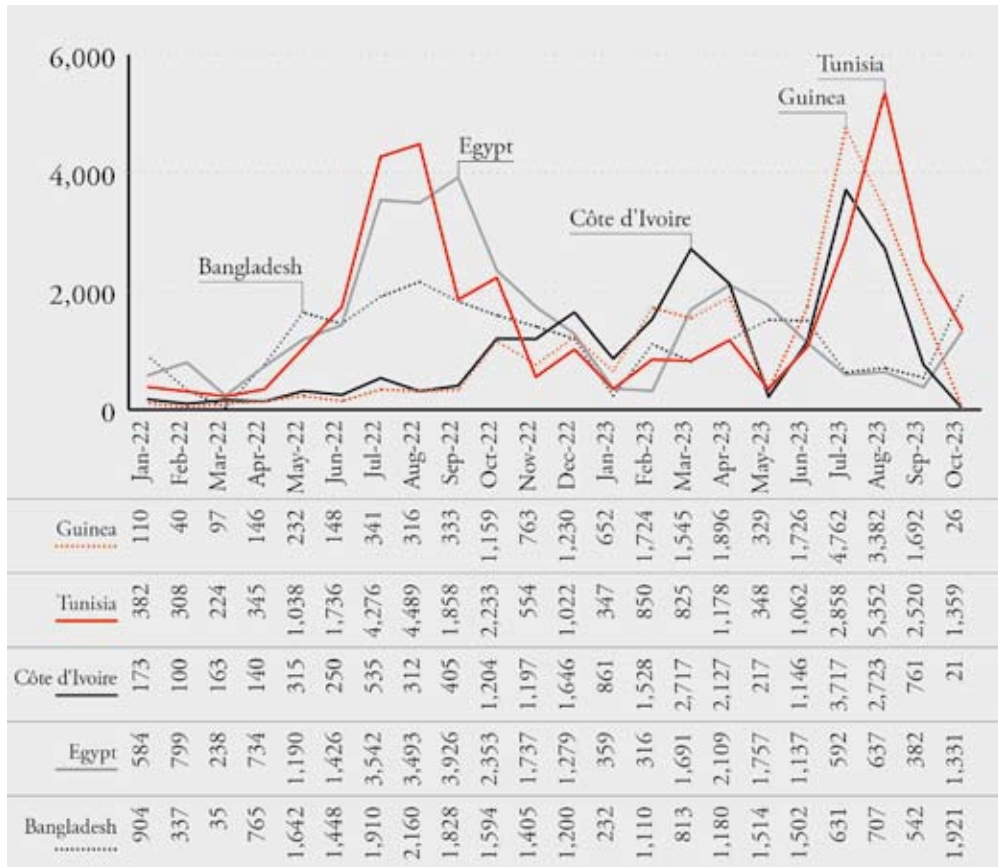


Figure 2. Most common nationalities of arrivals by sea to Italy (January 2022–October 2023) (UNHCR 2023)

Fuelled by chronically unresolved economic and social problems, the growing inclination to migrate is indicated by the fact that in the first 11 months of 2023 the Tunisian coast guard intercepted nearly 70,000 irregular migrants heading for Italy.⁴⁴ This figure is significantly higher than data from 2022. The increasing intensity of migration from Tunisia also signals the poor effectiveness of the

⁴³ UNHCR 2023.

⁴⁴ FRANCE24 2023.

agreement signed in July 2023 by the European Union and the North African country on issues including migration.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that an increasingly high percentage of irregular migrants leaving for Europe from Tunisia are not Tunisian, but Sub-Saharan in origin. This further affirms Tunisia's status as a transit country. According to UNHCR data, the country of origin of migrants arriving in Italy by sea between January 2022 and October 2023 can be broken down as, 65%, or 93,090 from Tunisia, while the rest is divided between Libya (30%) and Turkey (5%).

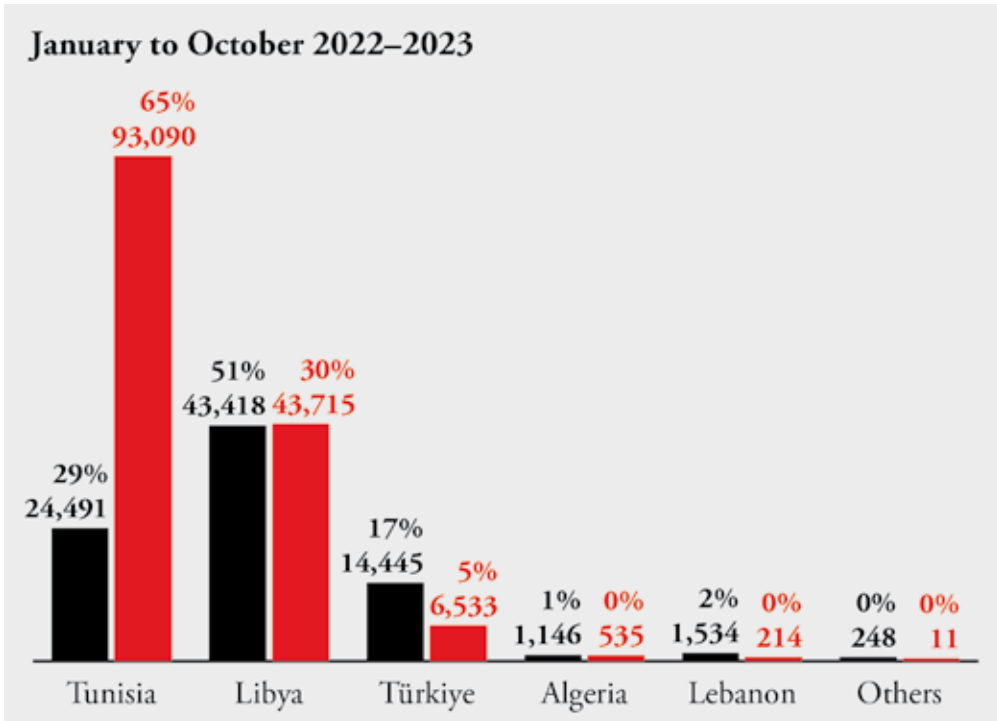


Figure 3. Country of origin for irregular migrants arriving in Italy by sea (January 2022 – October 2023).

The proportion of foreigners among irregular migrants intercepted in Tunisia was 31% in 2021,⁴⁵ 59% in 2002, and as high as 78% by 2023.⁴⁶ The last of these figures may lead us to the probably mistaken conclusion that the desire to migrate has been decreasing among Tunisian citizens. A more likely explanation is that Tunisian authorities exert significantly greater efforts at the exit points of illegal migration to intercept their own citizens, as opposed to citizens from the Sub-

⁴⁵ ABDERRAHIM 2023, 15.

⁴⁶ FRANCE24 2023.

Saharan region, mostly Guinea and Ivory Coast.⁴⁷ In essence, the practice reflects President Kais Saied's conviction that the growing presence of Sub-Saharanans poses a national security risk for Tunisia, which needs to be tackled with both diplomatic and military tools.⁴⁸

Conclusions

Despite Tunisia increasingly playing a triple role (sending, transit and receiver country) in the Euro-African migration system, it continues to define its situation as a sending state. Partly to consolidate their own power, the leaders of the North African country that gained independence from France in 1956 lent considerable support to Tunisian citizens seeking work abroad, because this helped ease socio-economic tensions. However, the tightening of European visa policies and border control in the 1990s had negative impacts on the former colonies of North Africa, which led to the establishment of irregular migration routes from North Africa to Europe in the same decade. The routes that also cross into parts of Tunisian territory continue to exist, but their traffic and user base have changed significantly in the past three decades. In the period since 2011 Tunisia and the European Union has had varying degrees of success in managing the flow of irregular migration to Europe, while a mass of people increasing in size and the range of nationalities attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life. The European Union considers the fortification of North African states as gatekeepers a key to success in fighting the increasingly urgent problem of irregular migration. However, Tunisia's effective participation in the scheme is currently hindered by multiple factors.

⁴⁷ Personal interview with an IOM official, Rome, October 2023.

⁴⁸ ABDERRAHIM 2023, 9.

Bibliography

- ABDERRAHIM, Tasneem (2023): Tunisia: Increased Fragility Fuels Migration Surge. *Global Initiative*, July 2023. Source: <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Tasnim-Abderrahim-Tunisia-Increased-fragility-fuels-migration-surge-GI-TOC-July-2023.pdf>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- AWAD, Ibrahim – SELIM, Hedayat (2017): Labour Migration Governance in Times of Political Transition: A Comparative Analysis of Egypt and Tunisia. *Migration and Development* 6 (2017/1), 1–13.
- BEN YAHIA ET AL. (2019): *Transnational Organized Crime and Political Actors in the Maghreb and Sahel*, Mediterranean Dialogue Series (2019/17).
- BOUBAKRI, Hassen (2024): Migrants and Refugees in the Mediterranean Cities: Reception, Regulation and Actors – Tunisia a Case Study. In: Ricard ZAPATA-BARRERO, Ibrahim AWAD (eds.): *Migrations in the Mediterranean*. Springer, 109–122.
- DE BEL-AIR, Françoise (2016): *Migration Profile: Tunisia*. Policy Brief – European University Institute (2016/8).
- DE LEO, Andreina (2023): The EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding: A Blueprint for Cooperation on Migration? *Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, 19 Oct. 2023. Source: <https://timep.org/2023/10/19/the-eu-tunisia-memorandum-of-understanding-a-blueprint-for-cooperation-on-migration/>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- DINI, Sabine – GIUSA, Caterina (2020): *Externalising Migration Governance through Civil Society: Tunisia as a Case Study*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- ELDIN, Kamal – SALIH, Osman (2013): The Roots and Causes of the 2011 Arab Uprisings. *Arab Studies Quarterly* 35 (2013/2).
- FAURI, Francesca – STRANGIO, Donatella (2020): The Economic Bases of Migration from Italy: The Distinct Cases of Tunisia and Libya (1880s–1960s). *The Journal of North African Studies* 25 (2020/3) 447–471.
- FERWAGNER, Péter Ákos (2009): A hadseregek politikai szerepe az arab országokban. In: Garaczi, Imre – Szilágyi, István (szerk.): *Hadseregek a Mediterráneumban*, Zrínyi, Veszprém – Budapest, 55–87.
- FLERI, Giuliano, Beniamino (2022): The (Re)Birth of a Mediterranean Migration System. The Case of Tunisian Migration in Sicily. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 27 (2022/4), 623–642.
- FRANCE24 (2023): *70,000 Migrants Intercepted by Tunisia in 2023: Official*. 09 Sep. 2023. Source: <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231209-70-000-migrants-intercepted-by-tunisia-in-2023-official> Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.

- FRONTEX (2023a): *Irregular border crossings into EU so far this year highest since 2016*. 11 Dec. 2023. Source: https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/irregular-border-crossings-into-eu-so-far-this-year-highest-since-2016-hZ9xWZ?fbclid=IwAR2JLmImC6--0xTxnbyTBreTLuXPv4aq03L1p2KLSBcknd44DIWbU7e__dU. Accessed on 06 Jan. 2024.
- FRONTEX (2023b): *Risk Analysis 2023/2024*. 04 Sep. 2023. Source: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-risk-analysis-2023-2024-discusses-challenges-at-eu-external-borders-J6yq05>. Accessed on 06 Jan. 2024.
- HANLON, Querine – HERBERT, Matthew M. (2015): *Border Security Challenges in the Grand Maghreb*, United States Institute for Peace, 109, 2015.
- HERBERT, Matthew (2016): *At the Edge. Trends and Routes of North African Clandestine Migrants*. Institute for Security Studies, 298, 2016.
- HERBERT, Matt – GALLIEN, Max (2020): *Divided They Fall. Frontiers, Borderlands and Stability in North Africa*. Institute for Security Studies, North Africa Report 6.
- HERBERT, Matt (2022a): *Losing Hope. Why Tunisians are Leading the Surge in Irregular Migration to Europe*. Research Report – Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2022.
- HERBERT, Matt (2022b): *The Challenge of Coordinating Border Management Assistance between Europe and the Maghreb*. Migration Policy Institute.
- IMF (2010): *World Economic Outlook Database*. Source: https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2010/October/weo-report?c=744,&s=NGDP_RPCH,PCPI,PCPIPCH,PCPIE,PCPIEPCH,LUR,LP,&sy=1980&ey=2015&ssm=0&scsm=1&ssc=0&ssd=1&ssc=0&sic=0&sort=country&ds=.&br=1. Accessed on 06 Jan. 2024.
- JONES, Mared Gwyn (2023): Tunisia denies entry to European Parliament's foreign affairs mission. *Euronews*, 14 Sep. 2023. Source: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/09/14/tunisia-denies-entry-to-european-parliaments-foreign-affairs-mission>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- KARASPASAN, Omer (2015): The Impact of Middle-Class Refugees in Tunisia. *Brookings*, 17 March 2015. Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-impact-of-libyan-middle-class-refugees-in-tunisia/>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- LUTTERBECK, Derek (2015): Tool of Rule: The Tunisian Police under Ben Ali. *The Journal of North African Studies* 20 (2015/5) 813–831.

- MARSAI, Viktor – N. RÓZSA, Erzsébet (2023): A Nílus partján minden csendes? – az egyiptomi migráció és menekülthelyzet. *Horizont* 2023/18. Migration Research Institute 14 Dec. 2023. Source: https://migraciokutato.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/20231214_HORIZONT_2023_18_marsai_viktor_n_rozsa_erzsebet_a_nilus_partjan_minden_csendes_az_egyiptomi_migracios_es_menekulthelyzet.pdf. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- MARTINI, Lorena Stella – MAGERISI, Tarek (2023): Road to Nowhere: Why Europe’s Border Externalisation is a Dead End. *European Council on Foreign Relations*. 14 Dec. 2023. Source: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/road-to-nowhere-why-europes-border-externalisation-is-a-dead-end/#summary>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- MIDDLE EAST MONITOR (2023): *Tunisia Rejects EU Financial Aid, Casting Doubt on an Immigration Deal*. 3 Dec. 2023. Source: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20231003-tunisia-rejects-eu-financial-aid-casting-doubt-on-an-immigration-deal/>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- NATTER, Katharina (2018): Rethinking Immigration Policy Theory Beyond ‘Western Liberal Democracies’. *Comparative Migration Study* 6 (2018/4) 1–21.
- NATTER, Katharina (2022): Tunisia’s Migration Politics throughout the 2011 Revolution: Revisiting the Democratisation–Migrant Rights Nexus. *Third World Quarterly* 43 (2022/7) 1551–1569.
- NATTER, Katharina (2023): Ad-hoc Immigration Governance: How States Secure their Power over Immigration through International Ambiguity. *Territory, Politics, Governance* 11 (2023/4) 677–694.
- ROMAN, Emanuela – PASTORE, Ferruccio (2018): *Analysing Migration Policy Frames of Tunisian Civil Society Organizations. How Do They Evaluate EU Migration Policies?* MedReset 14.
- SAYFO, Omar (2023): Kívül tartani minden áron! Milyen eszközökkel védik Európát a migrációtól az észak-afrikai és közel-keleti „határőr rezsimek”? *Horizont* 2023/12. Migration Research Institute, 12 Sep. 2023. Source: https://migraciokutato.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/20230912_HORIZONT_2023_12_sayfo_omar_kivul_tartani_minden_aron_milyen_eszkozokkal_vedik_europat_a_migraciotol_az_eszak_afrikai_es_kozel_keleti_hataror_rezsimek.pdf. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- TÁRIK, Meszár – TÓTH, Klaudia (2023): Marokkó Európa védőbástyája — az arab ország szerepe a nyugat-mediterrán térség migrációs rendszerében. *Horizont* 2023/8. Migration Research Institute, 6 June 2023. Source: https://migraciokutato.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/20230606_HORIZONT_2023_8_tarik_meszar_toth_klaudia_marokko_europa_vedobastyaja_az_

- arab_oroszag_szerepe_a_nyugat_mediterran_terseg_migracios_rendszereben.pdf. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- TRIANDAFYLLIDOU, Anna – MAROUKIS, Thanos (2012): *Migrant Smuggling. Irregular Migration from Asia and Africa to Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2012.
- UNHCR (2023): *Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard October 2023*. 11 Dec. 2023. Source: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105320>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.
- WORLD BANK (2022): *United Nations Population Division. World Population Prospects: 2022 Revision*. Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=TN>. Accessed on 6 Jan. 2024.

The Instrumentalization of Migration in the Arctic Circle: The Re-emergence of the Northern Migration Route and its Significance in the Russian Hybrid Military Toolbox

Róbert Gönczi

Abstract

The year 2023 emerged as a critical point in the intricate web of Finnish-Russian relations, opening a new era that will increase the importance of border management, migration dynamics and geopolitical strategies in the Northern European region. This study seeks to provide an in-depth account of the complex issues that culminated in the Finnish government's unprecedented decision at the end of 2023 to temporarily close all its border crossings with Russia.¹ As the events unfolded, a crisis emerged, characterised not only by the seemingly unusual patterns of the northern migration route, but also by the sudden strain in the previously pragmatic diplomatic relations between Moscow and Helsinki. The significance of the (re-)emergence of the Northern migration route goes beyond the tensions between Moscow and Helsinki, and it could have a serious impact on the overall diplomatic dynamics in Northern Europe.

Keywords: Finland, Russia, Norway, Instrumentalization of Migration, Border security

The Finnish Decision and its Background

On 28 November 2023, the Finnish government took the historic decision to close its entire eastern border with Russia due to concerns about growing migratory pressures. The seemingly unexpected but in fact strategically planned decision affecting nine border crossing points was implemented in a surprisingly short period of just 24 hours.² Finnish authorities initially declared that full border closure would last until 13 December, but the border crossing points remain closed as of February 2024.³

¹ MOSHES 2023.

² VOCK 2023.

³ NILSEN 2023.

The Finnish government set up facilities at airports and seaports for asylum seekers arriving from Russia who would be unable to submit applications at the closed land border crossing points.⁴ On 13 December, a review period was launched with the reopening of border crossing points, but they were closed again within 24 hours.⁵ The planned 14 January reopening of another two points was also abandoned eventually.⁶ The compelling reason behind the re-closures was the consistent presence of migratory pressure.

In contrast to the usual migration patterns where Finland appears as a destination country, the crisis at the end of 2023 showed a completely different trend. Most migrants from Russia – typically Syrian, Somali, and Yemeni nationals – did not intend to stay in Finland permanently.⁷ Rather, they planned to go on to another Western European, Schengen and EU Member State (e.g. Germany, The Netherlands or Belgium).

Between the closure of the border and January 2024, a reported 150-170 migrants disappeared on Finnish territory.⁸ Until the end of 2023, the increase in migratory pressure was slow but steady, especially in the month of November.⁹ Most migrants registered at border crossing points were men aged between 20 and 30,¹⁰ and most of them reported that they had tried but failed to enter the Schengen area before, typically from Belarus into Poland, Lithuania or Latvia.¹¹

According to Finnish data, the migrants affected by the crisis held 31 different nationalities, with Syrians, Somalis, and Yemenis the most common.¹² The rapid diffusion of both real information (e.g. about easier access to the Finnish border) and speculation (e.g. about the opening of the border) among them was facilitated by social media networks as contributors to the complex dynamics of the crisis.¹³

The Finnish position is that Russia is responsible for the significant increase in migration.¹⁴ Finland, like Poland and the Baltic States, sees the migration crisis

⁴ Personal interview with Finnish officials, Helsinki, 17/01/2024.

⁵ LEMOLA – BUBOLA 2023.

⁶ GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR IN FINLAND 2023.

⁷ Personal interview with Finnish officials, Helsinki, 17/01/2024.

⁸ INFO MIGRANTS 2024.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Personal interview with Finnish officials, Helsinki, 17/01/2024.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ VAN RIJ 2024.

on the eastern (Belarusian) and the northern (Arctic) migration route as a hybrid threat, rather than a humanitarian crisis.¹⁵ Social media and their misleading advertisements, especially when targeting Middle Eastern and North African migrants in Belarus, have contributed significantly to the reassertion of the importance of the northern migration route.

Interestingly, the crisis did not extend to the green border, it was limited to the area of the official border crossing points.¹⁶ The main reason for this is the geographical nature of the Finnish-Russian border region, with its frozen, waterlogged, swampy terrain that is difficult and dangerous to cross, especially in the late autumn and winter months. But another reason is the organised nature of this migratory pressure. The unfolding crisis on the Finnish-Russian border at the end of 2023 gives a broad picture of the changing nature of northern European relations, especially since the accession of the traditionally neutral Finland to NATO in 2022. The crisis could have serious implications for European perceptions and policies on migration, as well as for geopolitical dynamics and stability in the region.

The Russian Instrumentalization of Migration

The instrumentalization of migration, often referred to in the media as the ‘weaponisation of migration’, is a complex phenomenon that involves the deliberate creation or manipulation of migration flows for political, military and/or economic ends, such as gaining influence in or potentially destabilising the targeted country.¹⁷ This strategy is characterised by hidden motives, plausible deniability, and the use of migration as a means of coercion. It has profound global implications, but it can also be broken down into specific local cases like the events at the Finnish-Russian border.

Other cases were noted in a wide variety of geopolitical contexts, with a documented history going back to the early 1950s.¹⁸ According to the available data, this specific hybrid instrument was deployed in at least 77 instances worldwide between 1951 and 2023, with a 65% success rate. Initially used by weaker states such as Haiti (1979–1988), Austria (1981–1982) or Albania (1990–1991), its usefulness was eventually realised by larger regional powers such as Russia, Iran, or Pakistan. Since then, the larger powers have implemented the instrumentalization of migration in

¹⁵ GÖNCZI 2023.

¹⁶ Personal interview with INGO officials, Helsinki, 17/01/2024.

¹⁷ GREENHILL 2010.

¹⁸ Ibid.

their hybrid toolbox, combining military and non-military capabilities to achieve their goals.

However, the instrumentalization of migration is a double-edged weapon, capable of exacerbating tense inter-state relations, creating an environment conducive to the development of smuggling networks, promoting facts that contradict the narrative of the organiser of the pressure, and it can even have unintended consequences.¹⁹ Historical examples, such as the construction of the Berlin Wall in the 1960s or the unintended strategic weakening of South Vietnam by the arrival of North Vietnamese refugees, highlight the potential risks of this strategy.

The phenomenon poses a moral dilemma for the targeted country whose decision-makers must resolve the tension between respect for the human rights instruments of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the national interest of border protection.²⁰ This is precisely one of the main objectives of the instrumentalization of migration. Others are to generate social dissatisfaction with the political elite, to erode the leadership's sense of security, to strategically weaken and destabilise the target country, and to discourage the use of conventional military force to achieve plausible deniability while reaching its goals at the same time.

Russia is emerging on the global stage as an experienced user of hybrid tools such as disinformation campaigns or migration instrumentalization operations.²¹ With seven documented cases of Russian (and Soviet) migration instrumentalization attempts between 1979 and 2023 (involving Belarus as its closest ally), Moscow is an experienced user of this capability in the geopolitical arena.

The 1999 Union State²² between Russia and Belarus serves as a case study in the instrumentalization of migration to put pressure on NATO and the EU, create

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ FAKHRY – PARKES – RÁCZ 2022.

²² The Russian-Belarusian Union State of 1999 refers to an agreement between the two states aimed at political and economic integration. This integration treaty was implemented on 8 December 1999. The Treaty establishing the Union State was signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka in Moscow. The aim of the State Union was to enhance cooperation and integration between the two countries in various fields, including politics, defence, economy, and culture. The agreement foresaw the establishment of joint institutions such as a joint parliament and a Council of Ministers. The treaty also aimed to coordinate foreign policy and defence efforts. Despite the existence of the Union State, integration was limited, and the two countries retained a degree of sovereignty. The Union State has faced serious challenges since its establishment, and as a result the unification process has not proceeded as planned. Russia and Belarus continue to maintain their national identities and sovereign political systems. However, the agreement remains in force, opening ever deepening platforms for cooperation in the areas mentioned above. (DEEN – ROGGEVEEN – ZWEERS 2021.)

insecurity, and use migration as a distraction. In 2021 it was used in Belarus primarily as a response to EU sanctions, which also diverted domestic public attention from the economic problems of the Eastern European state.²³

The objectives of the Union State in Belarus since 2021 have also been characterised by a deliberate strategy to polarise public opinion within the European Union.²⁴ By exacerbating the fundamentally divisive issue of migration in Europe, the Union State has created room for internal political discord and deepening disagreements between EU member states. At the same time, the two allies have also made efforts to undermine the credibility of border control authorities and armies, and to erode public confidence in these institutions through disinformation operations. Moreover, the Union State is spinning a narrative that harms the image of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia within the EU. Through the clever use of its disinformation platforms, it portrays the three countries as inhuman states where European standards are violated, and human rights are disregarded by border guards who act downright ‘beastly’ in their pushback strategies. Another aspect of this strategic approach is the portrayal of the EU and NATO as a threat to the public in Russia and Belarus, which fuels scepticism about the democratisation process. The Union State also used this opportunity to assess NATO’s interoperability, especially in the critical year of 2021 when the portents of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine had already begun to show on the geopolitical horizon.

With the Belarusian crisis diminishing in importance, Moscow could finally turn its attention to the Finnish-Russian border for a repeat exploitation of its instrumentalization capabilities. As the instrumentalization of migration continues to shape the geopolitical landscape, understanding its historical roots, global spread and concrete applications becomes of paramount importance. The focus on the Finnish-Russian border serves as a timely and illustrative case study that highlights the changing nature of this strategic hybrid instrument and its implications for regional stability and international relations.

The 2015–2016 Arctic Migration Crisis

Russia’s motivation, its strategy, and the complex web of possible consequences of the Finnish-Russian border crisis can all be traced back to an earlier, 2015–2016 Russian attempt. The year 2015 witnessed the unfolding of the Arctic migration

²³ FORTI 2023.

²⁴ GÖNCZI 2023.

crisis, a multifaceted geopolitical phenomenon triggered by the political and economic sanctions imposed on Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea in 2014.²⁵

Russia's annexation of Crimea and the subsequent imposition of political and economic sanctions by the European Union created a tumultuous geopolitical environment that triggered a surge in migration. Middle Eastern and North African migrants appeared along the northernmost Russian-Schengen border. Amid tightened border restrictions, an unusual solution emerged for crossings: the phenomenon of 'migrants on bicycles'. Taking advantage of a legal loophole that allowed bicycles to be classified as vehicles, migrants hit on this innovative tactic to bypass border restrictions prohibiting pedestrian crossings.²⁶

On 22 March 2016, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö met Vladimir Putin in Moscow.²⁷ The meeting resulted in a solution to the increasing migratory pressure on the Finnish-Russian border: Russia agreed to help Finland reduce immigration numbers in an area where previously there had been no illegal migration pressure at all. The Finnish president's success in diplomatically curbing migration pressure was closely linked to his denunciation of the provision restricting bilateral relations between Helsinki and Moscow, originating from the sanctions due to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. This strategic move demonstrates the delicate balance between national interests and wider geopolitical considerations stemming from Russia's 2014 Crimean invasion.

The adoption of the 2002–2004 Belarusian method of organizing migration pressure has become a powerful hybrid instrument for Russia to exert pressure.²⁸ By orchestrating and then suspending migration pressure, Russia has demonstrated its ability to weaken the EU's united position against Moscow on Ukraine-related sanctions. This strategy, initially used by Russia against Finland and Norway, has subsequently been successfully used by others, such as Turkey²⁹ or Morocco.³⁰

²⁵ SZYMAŃSKI – ŻOCHOWSKI – RODKIEWICZ 2016.

²⁶ LUHN 2016.

²⁷ SZYMAŃSKI – ŻOCHOWSKI – RODKIEWICZ 2016.

²⁸ Belarus used migration instrumentalization on its common border with the EU in 2002 and 2004. This pressure was aimed at gaining diplomatic recognition and financial assistance. The Belarusian state was unsuccessful both times in its attempt to use migration as a tool to exert pressure, but it recognised the tactic's potential, and the Union State added it to its hybrid political toolbox. (GREENHILL 2010.)

²⁹ MASCAREÑAS 2022.

³⁰ CASSARINO 2021.

In parallel with the crisis on the Finnish border, a similar situation was unfolding in Norway in 2015 when irregular migrants started arriving from Russia in significantly increased numbers. In September 2015, authorities on this previously quiet and peaceful border counted 1,000 irregular migrants, in October 2,200, and in November 2,800, bringing the total number for 2015 to at least 6,000.³¹ The influx created a shockwave in domestic politics in Norway, as authorities faced a loss of control at their land borders for the first time since World War II.³²

The Arctic migration crisis of 2015–2016 was a pivotal period that revealed the complex interplay between geopolitics, migration dynamics, and diplomatic negotiations. The creative tactics employed by migrants and the orchestrators of these unnatural movements, as well as the strategic diplomatic manoeuvres of Russia and Finland, had a profound impact on regional stability. It also caused a serious ripple effect in neighbouring Norway, creating a sense of vulnerability, and highlighting the wider implications of such crises.

The Norwegian Border

The Norwegian-Russian border crossing at Storskog has undergone a remarkable transformation since 2015. Notably, it is the only open land border point where Russians can enter the Schengen area directly.³³ The border crossing point operates according to a specific timetable, adapted to the post-COVID era, with opening hours modified to 8-15:00.³⁴ Historically, Storskog has been a focal point for crossings between the two countries, with a record 320,000 crossings recorded in 2013. This number fell to 72,173 by 2023.³⁵

Cooperation and information sharing between Norway and Finland on border issues is crucial. Despite the crisis that saw a surge in the number of irregular migrants in 2015, the two nations have enjoyed excellent relations. Unlike Finland, Norway did not suspend the Schengen rules, which led to random checks on the Finnish side out of concerns that Russian nationals could cross the open Norwegian border into Finnish territory.³⁶

³¹ Personal interview with Norwegian officials, Kirkenes, 22/01/2024.

³² Personal interview with Norwegian academics, Oslo, 23/01/2024.

³³ KRIVTSOVA 2023.

³⁴ Personal interview with Norwegian officials, Kirkenes, 22/01/2024.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ SZUMSKI 2023.

The authorities in the Pasvik Valley, an area of high importance, imposed a heavy fine of €1,500 on anyone crossing the Norwegian-Russian border illegally via this difficult-to-control green border.³⁷ While Russia fortifies its side of the border with electric fences equipped with sensors, Norway prefers to rely on the trustworthiness of its citizens. On the border, small signs warn that the Russian Federation's territory lies just two metres from the posts marking the Norwegian border.³⁸

On the maritime border, especially after the Nord Stream incident, foreign ships (including Russian vessels) are allowed only into three ports in the Norwegian Barents Sea, highlighting the sensitivity of the oil and gas industry, especially liquefied natural gas (LNG) carriers.³⁹ In the interests of national sovereignty, the army controls the green border as another layer to Norway's border management structure.

The joint Border Commissariat, established in 1949 by a bilateral treaty, is responsible for controlling the 197.7 km long Russian-Norwegian border. They cooperate with the local Russian FSB and the Norwegian garrison of the Sor-Varanger region (East-Finnmark County).⁴⁰ The cooperation also extends to the FSB's units in Karelia (land) and the Western Arctic (maritime), which enables the two nations to work together more effectively in controlling land and maritime borders.

Historical agreements such as the Norwegian-Swedish-Russian treaty of 1826 and the Finnish Corridor in Petsamo⁴¹ between 1920 and 1942 underline the long history and inevitability of cooperation in Norwegian-Russian relations to avoid

³⁷ Personal interview with Norwegian officials, Kirkenes, 22/01/2024.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Personal interview with Norwegian officials, Kirkenes, 22/01/2024.

⁴¹ The Finnish corridor of Petsamo (also known as Pechenga) refers to the strip of land in the northern part of the Scandinavian peninsula that Finland leased from the Soviet Union between 1920-1942. The corridor gave Finland access to the Barents Sea and was the result of the 1920 Treaty of Tartu. The Treaty of Tartu, signed between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1920, was intended to settle territorial disputes between the two countries following the Finnish War of Independence. As part of the treaty, the Soviet Union ceded to Finland the territory of Petsamo, giving Helsinki an ice-free port on the Arctic Ocean. Petsamo, now in the north of Russia, became strategically important because of the harbour that was accessible all year round. The Finnish Corridor gave Finland access to maritime trade routes and fishing grounds in the Barents Sea. In 1940, during the Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland, the Soviets attacked their north-western neighbours who were forced to cede the Petsamo area in the 1940 Moscow Peace Treaty. After the signing of this treaty, Finland lost its only port in the Arctic Ocean. With the loss of the corridor, the importance of the area declined. After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, the area became part of the Russian Federation. (KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN 1944.)

conflict.⁴² Despite occasional tensions, the joint military exercises between Norway and Russia testify to the success of the conviction that open borders and maintaining communication are preferable to closed borders and no communication.

The Lapland Border Guard, established in 2012 by Finland in cooperation with Frontex, manages an extensive border stretch, 80% of which consists of rivers and lakes.⁴³ Annual exercises, such as the Kirkenes winter exercise, are becoming more widespread and inviting for the participation of other countries, most recently Germany.

The role of the Border Commissioner's office in Kirkenes illustrates the nuanced approach Norway takes to managing its borders with Russia. The office is mainly concerned with the day-to-day management of the border, such as reindeer migration and ghost ship treaties,⁴⁴ rather than with the arming of the border or the erection of physical barriers.⁴⁵

Thanks to the pragmatic relations built since 2016, Norway has managed to ensure that unlike its neighbour Finland that continues to face the hybrid threat of instrumentalized migration, Storskog has a net zero number of irregular border crossers. For the Russians, it is important that the Norwegian border remains open, as it is their only land connection to the Schengen area that remains important for the Federation, even if to a decreasing extent. Of course, in analysing the Russian system, it is essential to note that in political science terms the processes of the federation are irrational.⁴⁶ It is not inconceivable that disregarding the Norwegian border in the instrumentalization of migration is the result not of a well-thought-out strategy, but of an ad hoc financial or political decision. In any case, the calm and security of the Norwegian border is conceivably related to its critical importance for the increasingly isolated Russian state and the pragmatic nature of their bilateral relations.

With its historical complexity, cooperation initiatives and changing challenges, the Norwegian-Russian border is a good example of the complex nature of international relations. From migration crises to joint military exercises, the

⁴² Personal interview with Norwegian officials, Kirkenes, 22/01/2024.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ The “ghost ship treaties” are international agreements by the international law of salvage that aim to address the problem of abandoned craft, often called “ghost ships”. These vessels are typically abandoned by their owners, adrift at sea or stranded in ports without proper maintenance or disposal plans. Ghost ships can pose significant environmental, navigational and safety risks, especially on busy shipping routes. (IILSS-INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LAW OF THE SEA STUDIES 2022.)

⁴⁵ Personal interview with Norwegian officials, Kirkenes, 22/01/2024.

⁴⁶ Personal interview with Norwegian academics, Oslo, 23/01/2024.

border's dynamics reflect the two nations' ongoing efforts to successfully navigate a sea of geopolitical change while maintaining diplomatic relations and open channels of communication.

Predictions for 2024

Moving into 2024, migration dynamics will continue to evolve, indicating possible changes in migration patterns and routes. One of the key projections for 2024 is the possibility of a surge in migrants during the summer months. Based on the Belarus crises of 2021, 2022 and 2023 that saw a significant increase in irregular migrants during the summer,⁴⁷ serious preparedness is required as those events could foreshadow similar challenges at the Finnish, Estonian or Norwegian-Russian borders.

Following the test run of the Arctic migration route in late 2023, the question arises whether this re- or newly discovered migration route will be actively used during the summer. The Arctic migration route is a potential alternative for migrants, and its viability and attractiveness is likely to be assessed in the coming months.

The closure of the Belarusian border is a challenge for the instrumentalization of migrants on the eastern route. Difficulties in exploiting the routinely travelled routes through Belarus raise the possibility of shifting orchestrated migration northwards. The events of 2023 in Finland could be seen as a test of capabilities that could pave the way for a change in strategies and routes.

Having experienced the complexity of managing migration dynamics, Norway is preparing for the potential challenges of 2024.⁴⁸ Lessons from past crises, such as the Arctic migration crisis in 2015-2016, underline the need for proactive measures to anticipate and manage potential surges in irregular migration numbers, especially during the summer months.

Strategically located in the Baltic region, Estonia is also on high alert. As its neighbouring countries experience changing migration patterns, Estonia, although it was not involved in either the Belarusian or Arctic migration crises, has recognised the need to step up its preparedness. Cooperation with international partners, information sharing, and adaptability of border control strategies have become key elements of Estonia's approach to addressing potential challenges. In

⁴⁷ STRAŻ GRANICZNA 2023.

⁴⁸ NIELSEN 2023.

this context, Tallinn announced in February 2024 that it would start preparing for the full closure of its border with Russia, following the Finnish example.⁴⁹

Preparing for the evolution of migration dynamics and possible changes in routes in 2024 will require a proactive and collaborative approach from nations such as Norway and Estonia. The challenges posed by the closure of the Belarusian border and the aftermath of the Arctic migration route testing highlight the need for strategic preparedness and international cooperation to effectively address the complex challenge of irregular migration and navigate through the Russian system of hybrid pressure tools.

Conclusion

In summary, this study has explored the intersections of geopolitical roaming, migration dynamics, and diplomatic complications, providing a picture of the evolution of Northern European relations. The seismic events of 2023, notably the unprecedented closure of the Finnish-Russian border crossings, are evidence of the multifaceted nature of the challenges facing the countries of the region. The study underlined the effectiveness of the instrumentalization of migration as a tool for geopolitical pressure, demonstrating Russia's adaptive capabilities to achieve its strategic goals.

The analysis of the Arctic migration crisis of 2015-2016 looked at the lasting impact of geopolitical events on migration patterns through historical lenses. Innovative strategies employed by migrants and the organizers of these artificial routes, as well as diplomatic negotiations between Finland and Russia, describe the delicate balance between national interests, broader geopolitical considerations, and human rights responsibilities.

The exploration of the Norwegian-Russian border situation highlighted the dynamic changes and challenges facing nations in Northern Europe since 2015. From the rise in irregular migration to the evolution of border management and cooperation efforts, the study revealed the nuanced nature of bilateral relations, which can serve as an example for addressing a crisis arising from the use of a hybrid instrument.

The study provides insightful projections for 2024, recognizing possible changes in migration patterns and the impact of geopolitical events, drawing parallels with

⁴⁹ TRIL 2024.

the Belarus crisis and the test run of the Arctic migration route at the end of 2023. The preparedness of nations such as Norway and Estonia underlines the need for a proactive approach to addressing the complexities of irregular migration.

Finally, the study demonstrated that weaving together the threads of history, geopolitics, and migration dynamics is necessary for a comprehensive and coherent analysis of recent events. There is a need for persistent vigilance, strategic preparedness, and international cooperation to address the challenges facing the Northern European region. The complex dynamics between national interests, migration flows and geopolitical strategies require adaptive policies and cooperative efforts to promote stability and resilience in this ever-changing landscape.

Special thanks to the Finnish Immigration Services, the Institute for Social Research in Oslo, IOM Helsinki and Oslo, the Ministry of Interior in Finland, and the Norwegian Border Commissioner for meeting with us and sharing critical information needed for the completion of our study.

Bibliography

- CASSARINO, Jean-Pierre (2021): *The Instrumentalization of Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean Area: Between Past and Present*. IEMed, 2021. Source: <https://www.iemed.org/publication/the-instrumentalization-of-migration-in-the-euro-mediterranean-area-between-past-and-present/>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- DEEN, Bob – ROGGEVEEN, Barbara – ZWEERS, Wouter (2021): *An Ever Closer Union? Ramifications of further integration between Belarus and Russia*. Clingendael Report, August 2021. Source: <https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/an-ever-closer-union.pdf>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- FAKHRY, Alla – PARKES, Roderick – RÁCZ, András (2022): *If Russia Uses Migration as a Weapon, Europeans Should Respond in Kind*. DGAP Policy Brief, March 2022. Source: https://dgap.org/sites/default/files/article_pdfs/dgap-policy-brief-2022-06-en_0.pdf. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- FORTI, Mirko (2023): Belarus-Sponsored Migration Movements and the Response by Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland: A Critical Appraisal. *European Papers*, Vol. 8., No. 1., pp. 227-238.
- GÖNCZI, Róbert (2023): Disinformation as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare at the Polish-Belarusian Border. *Warsaw Institute*, 28 Sep. 2023. Source: <https://warsawinstitute.org/disinformation-as-a-tool-of-hybrid-warfare-at-the-polish-belarusian-border/>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR IN FINLAND (2023): Finland's entire eastern border closed again. *Valtioneuvosto*, 14 December 2023. Source: <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/finland-s-entire-eastern-border-closed-again>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- GREENHILL, Kelly M. (2010): *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- IILSS-INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LAW OF THE SEA STUDIES (2022): *About LAW OF SALVAGE*, 9 July 2022. Source: <https://iilss.net/about-law-of-salvage/>. Accessed on 27 Mar. 2024.
- INFOMIGRANTS (2024): *Finland: Around 160 asylum seekers reported 'missing'*. 22 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/54681/finland-around-160-asylum-seekers-reported-missing>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- KRIVTSOVA, Olesia (2023): If they close the border, it will be unbearable. What Russians think about the last open checkpoint. *The Barents Observer*, 30 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/>

- en/borders/2023/11/if-they-close-border-it-will-be-unbearable-what-russians-think-about-last-open. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN, Erik R. v. (1944): The Petsamo Region. *Geographical Review*, Vol. 34., No. 3., pp. 405-417.
- LEMOLA, Johanna – BUBOLA, Emma (2023): Finland Closes Border With Russia Again. *The New York Times*, 14 Dec. 2023. Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/14/world/europe/finland-border-russia.html>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- LUHN, Alec (2016): Norway tells refugees who used cycling loophole to enter to return to Russia. *The Guardian*, 14 Jan. 2016. Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/14/norway-tells-refugees-bikes-russia-bicycle-immigration-storskog>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- MASCAREÑAS, Blanca Garcés (2022): *The «instrumentalisation» of migration*. CIDOB Report, Sep. 2022. Source: https://www.cidob.org/en/articulos/cidob_report/n_8/the_instrumentalisation_of_migration. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- MOSHES, Arkady (2023): *Closure of Russia-Finland Border Heralds End of Pragmatic Cooperation*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 12 Dec. 2023. Source: <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91227>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- NIELSEN, Nikolaj (2023): Oslo: all quiet on Russia border, after Finland closes crossings. *EUobserver*, 17 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://euobserver.com/migration/157708>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- NILSEN, Thomas (2023): Raja-Jooseppi closes. *The Barents Observer*, 28 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/borders/2023/11/breaking-raja-jooseppi-closes>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- STRAŻ GRANICZNA (2023): *Statystyki SG*. Source: <https://www.strazgraniczna.pl/pl/granica/statystyki-sg/2206,Statystyki-SG.html>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- SZUMSKI, Charles (2023): Finland starts round-the-clock border checks to stop Russian cars crossing via Norway. *Euractiv*, 29 Sep. 2023. Source: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/finland-starts-round-the-clock-border-checks-to-stop-russian-cars-crossing-via-norway/>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- SZYMAŃSKI, Piotr – ŻOCHOWSKI, Piotr – RODKIEWICZ, Witold (2016): Enforced cooperation: the Finnish-Russian migration crisis. *OSW*, 06 Apr. 2016. Source: <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-04-06/enforced-cooperation-finnish-russian-migration-crisis>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- TRIL, Maria (2024): *Estonia may close border with Russia over migration influx*. Euromaidan Press, 14 Feb. 2024. Source: <https://euromaidanpress>.

com/2024/02/14/estonia-may-close-borders-with-russia-due-to-stem-influx-of-migrants/. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.

- VAN RIJ, Armida (2024): Russia's withdrawal from its border agreement with Finland is an expansion of its hybrid warfare on the EU. *Chatham House*, 30 Jan. 2024. Source: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/01/russias-withdrawal-its-border-agreement-finland-expansion-its-hybrid-warfare-eu>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.
- VOCK, Ido (2023): Finland to close entire Russian border after migrant surge. *BBC*, 28 Nov. 2023. Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67555626>. Accessed on 22 Feb. 2024.

Book recommendation by Sára Kmeckó

**Omar Sayfo – Viktor Marsai – Kristóf György Veres: *Whose Space Is It? Parallel Societies and Urban Enclaves in Western Europe*.
MCC Press, Budapest 2024.**

Are there no-go zones in Europe? The answer is complex and highly sensitive politically. *Whose Space Is It?* is a volume tackling the gap in answers. It is the first scholarly work not only in Hungary but also internationally to offer a thematic comparison between immigrant-populated urban neighborhoods in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Britain, and the USA, together with the issues associated with these locales.

The issue of parallel societies has been brought to the fore of European political and public discourse in recent years. Polarized positions on the issue may go to extremes: some deny the continent has a problem at all, while others talk about “no-go zones” and conditions approaching civil war. The main goal of the volume authored by Migration Research Institute staff is to explore the phenomenon through comparative analysis across Western European and, in one chapter, North American examples. The book combines scholarly qualities with popular science for an accessible reading presented in thematic blocks.

Chapter I explores the background and patterns of the physical segregation of immigrants. It surveys the transformation that took place in the past decades in the Western and Northern European urban areas explored. The first immigrant-populated neighborhoods in Europe emerged in the 1960s when masses of people started arriving from the former colonies and through interstate labor lease agreements. They were put up by the receiving states in areas where property prices were the lowest. In Britain, Belgium, Holland, and Austria these meant working-class districts with poor infrastructure. France constructed concrete housing projects for the new arrivals. Germany, Denmark and Sweden offer up examples of both patterns, depending on the city. Later on, family reunification boosted the number of immigrants significantly, and because these neighborhoods continued to offer relatively low-cost housing, they remained attractive for the new arrivals as well. In a parallel trend, people from majority society were trickling out of these areas.

The chapter clarifies the widespread terminologies used in the political discourses of the countries under study, and it traces how the expression “no-go zone” became associated with immigrant neighborhoods from its original use in the context of the civil war in Northern Ireland. The authors of the volume establish how the 2015 migration wave also pushed to the center of public attention issues of the integration of immigrants already living in Europe. These issues were considered taboo before, thus could not become part of political discourse. As a result, the expression ‘no-go zones’ also acquired a new meaning. It is now commonly used to refer to neighborhoods where immigrants living in parallel societies constitute the majority of residents. Such societies are characterized by crime organized on the basis of ethnicity and worse than average public safety. Some majority groups experience a major loss in their subjective perception of security in relation to these areas. Authorities lack an understanding of the inner workings of these districts. Of their own volition or under political pressure they follow different practices on the job here than in areas inhabited by majority society.

Chapter II analyzes the social, cultural, and political obstacles to the integration of immigrants, particularly the non-European identity constructions of some immigrant communities. Preserving cultures that differ from those of Europe is aided further by “importing” spouses, as well as family reunification. The success or failure of integration is of course also due in large part to the integration policies of the receiving states, and the authors dedicate the next chapter to these.

Chapter III presents the range of integration efforts arising from the diverging historical trajectories of European countries, highlighting the contrasts between Anglo-American multiculturalism, French policies of assimilation, and the German model. The chapter also examines the educational policies applied in immigrant-majority areas, along with their impact on immigrant participation in the labor market. The authors establish that in countries where immigrants arrived in large numbers as unskilled labor (such as Germany, Belgium, Holland, France, and Austria), or where they landed as refugees (such as Germany and Sweden), their rates of unemployment are invariably higher than the majority society average. The reason is that immigrants from outside Europe tend to be less educated, and the degrees they may have are often non-equivalent to degrees issued by European universities. Consequently, most of them find employment in industry and the service sector, which positions are more exposed to economic uncertainties and crises. The employment prospects of second- and third-generation immigrants are further weakened by worse-than-average standards of education in immigrant area schools.

The neighborhoods populated by immigrants from different backgrounds are of course not identical. Chapter IV analyzes the factors determining the inner culture of the areas. The authors first seek an answer to the assertion that in some urban areas it is no longer possible to get by in the official tongue of the receiver country. The volume establishes that immigrants from lower socio-economic backgrounds generally tend to have a poorer grasp on the receiving country's language, which difference remains detectable in the weaker writing skills of the second and third generations. Their particular dialects often become ubiquitous in immigrant-populated areas. At the same time, these neighborhoods are inhabited by people arriving from different countries, therefore the language of the receiving state becomes a primary lingua franca for residents. Thus, there are no areas yet in Europe where one cannot get by in the tongue of the receiving country – with the exception of some Swedish districts housing immigrants from 2015.

The chapter also explores the patterns of organization of religious life in immigrant areas. Although socio-political public discourse is typically focused on Islam, the volume also discusses Christians arriving from outside Europe. The authors describe how the problems of ghettoization, parallel societies, and no-go zones affect areas populated by Muslim and non-Muslim (Christians from the Caribbean and Africa, etc.) immigrants in similar ways. In relation to Muslim areas the book states that their mien and street culture, which are shaped not by Islam but the character of the ethnic groups living there, are far from homogeneous.

The chapter also discusses the religious organization of European Muslims. The authors highlight that Western European countries typically do not have organically developed Muslim organizations connected to local states, therefore the organization of religious observation is overseen by entities connected to foreign states and non-state actors. There are several thousand Muslim organizations in Europe today, typically operating in a form that adjusts to the legal environment of the receiver country. For practical reasons their work is centered on the neighborhoods inhabited by the target population, as well as urban nodes within easy reach. Larger sender countries like Turkey or Morocco make the organization of religious life for their citizens living in Europe part of their diaspora policy framework. To a lesser extent, but Algeria, Tunisia, Pakistan and other Muslim countries also support the running of mosques and Muslim organizations in Europe, typically as part of bilateral cultural diplomacy. Although it has no diasporas, Saudi Arabia too used to play a decisive role in religious organization. However, due to the political changes of recent years, the Gulf country has withdrawn considerably from such

activities. Apart from state actors, there are also numerous non-state organizations and groups operating in Europe, including the Muslim Brotherhood, Tablighi Jamaat, and Salafis.

Chapter IV also engages with issues of political participation among the residents of immigrant-majority areas. These districts tend to lean to the political left because the guest laborers that constituted the mass arrivals of the 1970s and '80s gained initial support from left-wing trade unions. Subsequently, it was typically left-wing politicians who opened up opportunities for family reunification, gaining citizenship, and social integration for immigrants. Politicians with Muslim origins also tend to be affiliated with left-wing or green parties. For now, Muslims are significantly underrepresented in national politics compared to their numbers in society, but at the level of municipalities their presence is roughly on par with their demographic ratio. While the political participation of immigrants, including Muslims, increases as their integration deepens, their own political parties have rarely become successful. The reason for this is that the voter base they target is highly heterogeneous, with identities defined by several factors that include ethnicity, place of residence, social position, religious affiliation, and levels of integration. One exception to this rule is Denk, a political party that has successfully contested elections in Holland since 2017. The party is supported by Turkey, and it managed to channel the immigrant vote following the collapse of the socialists.

The chapter states that besides religion, the identity and world view of some of the immigrants are determined to a large extent by a counterculture that emerged in the early 1990s. This counterculture is inspired by hip-hop music originating from America, and it is supported by left-leaning ideas. Its performers use American formulae to articulate their social and political thoughts.

Chapter V engages with the phenomena most frequently featured in news media, feeding public fears the most. Analyzing available crime statistics, the authors explore whether immigrant-majority areas are in fact dangerous. They also cover clan criminality, or a subtype of crimes that can be linked to particular groups of immigrants. The volume establishes that the claim of public safety statistics invariably being worse in immigrant-majority areas is not true, despite examples such as Rinkeby in Stockholm. On the other hand, residents' subjective sense of security is below average almost everywhere. Even though in several countries, including Germany, the least safe areas are not immigrant-majority neighborhoods but downtown areas and train stations, a significant portion of the perpetrators

apprehended here are of immigrant background who live in neighborhoods of inexpensive accommodation. Besides cultural and economic characteristics, the causes of the high crime rates also include the fact that members of these communities tend to be younger than the median age of the population, thus they include a higher proportion of the age groups generally responsible for committing crimes. Germany and Sweden also have clan criminality that is typically connected to Middle Eastern and African immigrant groups.

Although everyday life is mostly quiet in immigrant neighborhoods, the tensions that surface from time to time have led to riots on a number of occasions in nearly every Western country. The authors claim that authorities tend to respond according to the practice of local police. In Germany, Britain, and Holland police typically react with force to the rioters. Fearing societal repercussions, there are usually no forceful responses in France, while Swedish police were completely unprepared for the flare-ups of street violence that have occurred since 2015.

Chapter V analyzes the conflicts imported to Europe from the home countries of immigrants, giving particular emphasis to the phenomenon of “long-distance nationalism” and the increase in antisemitism.

Immigrant-population neighborhoods, ghettos, no-go zones also exist outside Europe. The final part of the volume, Chapter VI explores the similarities and differences between Latino immigrant communities in the United States and the immigrant communities of Europe.

Whose Space Is It? Parallel Societies and Social Enclaves in Western Europe is a well-structured work overall. The writing is accessible, the volume of works consulted is impressive, and the text is effectively complemented by numerous graphics, charts, and maps.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Róbert GÖNCZI is an analyst at the Migration Research Institute. His research focuses on the instrumentalization of migration regarding the post-soviet region.

Sára KMECZKÓ is a researcher at the Migration Research institute. She is expert in Islamic Studies, International Security and Defence Policy and PhD student in Military Sciences.

Mark KRIKORIAN has served as Executive Director of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) since 1995. He is the author of several books, including *The New Case against Immigration, Both Legal and Illegal*. He holds a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University. He spent two years at Yerevan State University in then-Soviet Armenia.

Nicolas POUVREAU-MONTI is the co-founder of the Paris-based Observatoire de l'immigration et de la démographie think tank, conducting research on various aspect of immigration and integration regarding Europe.

Jim ROBB is an expert in U.S. immigration trends. He graduated at Asbury College and is now the Vice President of NumbersUSA. Previously he was the Executive Editor at *The Good News Magazine*.

Eric RUARK is an internationally recognized expert on U.S. immigration policy, he is the Director of Research at NumbersUSA. He has a B.A. and an M.A. in History from Virginia Commonwealth University and completes his comprehensive Ph.D. exams at the University of Maryland.



