

Are We Going to Need More Immigrants?
Posted On: December 31, 1969

Immigration history in the US has always followed predictable trajectories. People around the world have periodically flooded in when there were jobs for them or a future for them. They were needed but simultaneously hated by the already integrated working class who feared labor competition.

The Players. Our first large-scale group of migrants were African---not voluntary immigrants, but slaves. Their history is a separate category.

In the mid-19th century, German migrants came, fleeing the anarchist and revolutionary turmoil of their homelands. Earlier, during the 18th century, they came in such numbers that Benjamin Franklin worried that German might replace English as the language of the new country.

Scandinavian immigrants poured in when their overpopulation in their homelands made hunger a real possibility. They were welcomed here as homesteaders in the newly opened northern frontier.

Irish, fleeing the starvation of the potato famine arrived, provided cheap labor as the railroads were built and domestic help for the newly rich.

German Jews arrived in mid-century filling the notch of merchants and department stores, which were needed and welcomed. Hordes of Russian and Polish Jews, dirt poor, arrived at the turn of the century and filled the niche of sweatshop labor and shopkeepers.

Chinese labor was brought in to build the railroads from the west coast to meet the Irish and Black workers from the east.

Japanese left overpopulated Japan to settle in the west where they filled the need for truck gardening to feed the growing cities.

Now Mexican farm labor (and inexpensive industrial labor in the Mississippi Valley) have come in large numbers from Mexico.

Fears and Consequences. With each group of immigrants, there were fears that the American culture would suffer from this influx from disease, crime, and unsavory behavior. Eventually, the second generation of such groups quickly became as American as earlier arrivals. However, ancient prejudices often made such integration difficult. The Chinese, after the railroads were built, were hunted down, their towns set fire, and many either sent back to China or forbidden to bring women to start families. Equally inexplicable was the internment of the very integrated Japanese during World War II. America is grown up enough to have made amends for such injustice.

Demographic Changes. The latest groups to arrive, Mexican field workers and Muslims from such underdeveloped states such as Somalia, the Palestinian territories, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, bring in familiar concerns that they aren't assimilable because of their numbers (Mexicans) and ideologies (Muslims).

Surprisingly, new demographic information about Mexico is that they are having a population crash from fertility rates of 6 to 2.1, which means that the flow of surplus Mexicans is also in free fall. It is conceivable that in a few decades, Mexican labor will be sought and welcomed in those same areas where they are feared today. Who else will take care of Americans in the southwest as they age in retirement homes?

As for the influx of radicalized young Muslims, their numbers too in some places are plummeting. The fertility rate of the Palestinians has begun to rapidly decline. Among immigrants from overpopulated Pakistan and Afghanistan, their birthrate drops one generation after immigration. And most important, countries that have financed (deliberately or unknowingly) radical Islamist groups are now starting to withhold the money. Canada has cut off their half-century of supporting Palestinian charities. Some oil-wealth countries themselves are starting to learn that such support comes back to bite them.

Most important, as the population of young males around the world declines, so will terrorism. Even the United Nations, in their population studies, note that a surge of males from 16-30 means trouble for its society. And the UN has been largely

responsible for this population explosion and Islamic radicalization by maintaining Palestinian refugees and paying them by the head, long after they should all have been absorbed. This well-intentioned largesse is coming to an end. Canada and the US since 9/11 have led the way to a policy of following and cutting it off the money. Let's hope others will follow.

672 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and writer. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink