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“Mass Migration in Europe: Assimilation, Integration, and Security”

Written Statement:

Immigration into the West

Immigration into the West from non-Western countries is not new. The catalysts behind it, from hopes of finding greater economic opportunity to seeking sanctuary from political violence, are likewise not novel. But what currently is different are both the size of the influxes (variously estimated at over 5 million persons in the last decade into Europe and somewhere over 10 million into the United States) and the apparent inability of Western societies to assimilate and integrate rapidly newcomers—and the risks inherent in such failures. Not since the aftermath of World War II have we seen a pool of 50-60 million potential migrants per year seeking to leave their home countries, largely due to the aftermath of wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria, political violence in Africa, and poverty in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

European and American commonalities

Both Europe and the United States share many of the same immigration affinities. Few westerners migrate to Africa, Asia or Latin America; all three continents are the chief sources of out migration to Europe—especially the Sudan, Afghanistan, and Syria that account for somewhere between 60 and 70 percent of current arrivals. Immigration is increasingly also not diverse. Most immigrants into Europe again are now mostly from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, Muslim, and overwhelming male. In contrast, Asia, Latin America, and Mexico supply the preponderant number of immigrants into the United States and the proportions are not so overwhelmingly male.

The idea of a “refugee” is now controversial—given the perception that claiming migration is due to political danger at home or economic exploitation is seen a fast track to sanctuary and legal status.

For the most part, large percentages of immigrants arrive into both Europe and the United States *without* acquiring language fluency of the host country, a high school diploma or the equivalent, or legality. Often their arrival prompts enormous political implications, both in altering domestic political realities in consensual societies (e.g., strengthening institutional progressive and social welfare programs and their political supporters, while creating a populist backlash especially among the non-elite), and in attempts by nations to leverage politically the recipients of their former populations (displaying a sudden interest in the human rights status and social welfare of their expatriate populations).

The ensuing controversies over massive immigration in the host countries often preclude accurate data assessment, given politicization of the issue and sheer size of the migration. No one really knows either in Europe or the United States the exact number of immigrants residing illegally in their countries.

Throughout Europe and the United States, conservatives tend to object to massive non-diverse and illegal immigration. Liberals and progressives are more supportive. In both cases the reasons are both philosophical and political. Often arrivals into Europe and the United States bring with them fears of increased violence, whether defined in the American context mostly by gang and cartel threats or in the European instance radical Islamic terrorism. Arrivals often sense that multicultural doctrines reflect a lack of confidence in their hosts about Western traditions and customs, and often there arises a chauvinism that immigrant waves can change the politics, culture, and demography of their hosts in unilateral fashion.

Current pushback and populist movements in both Europe and the United States are fueled by the number and the inability of immigrants to assimilate. In blunt terms, the middle classes believe that their own privileged elite in the abstract encourages massive immigration, either for political, economic, or psycho-sociological reasons, but has the money, privilege, and influence to insulate themselves from the consequences of their own ideology—a reality that falls on the less privileged who must deal with a host of problems on the ground.

Europe's Far Greater Challenges

While immigration in the West shares the above commonalities, *there are also radical differences*. In comparative terms, the 5 million aggregate arrivals into Europe in the last ten years are relatively modest numbers compared to the resident migrant population in the United States, where the percentage of non-native born currently is about double that of Europe (12-13% to 7%).

Yet for a variety of reasons the United States until recently was far better equipped to absorb immigrants than was Europe. Its economy on average has been more robust and its unemployment rates lower. America has had a far stronger record of the melting-pot in assimilating, integrating, and intermarrying arrivals, and its population until recently has been far more racially and ethnically diverse.

In addition, the majority of immigrants into the United States are from either Mexico or Latin America (60-75 percent) and more often share a common religion with their hosts. While the problem of migrants overstaying visas after entering air and sea ports is universal, the American challenge of porous borders is largely confined to its border with Mexico, whereas in Europe migrants have arrived by both sea and land throughout southern and eastern Europe.

The structure of the European Union lacks the political cohesion of the United States, and individual countries are more likely to question and nullify EU immigration and refugee laws, than are states in America—with some notable exceptions—to nullify federal laws. Efforts to build border walls have proved effective in curbing immigration into Greece, Bulgaria, or Hungary, but often without a uniform EU strategy and with the result of pitting one country

against the other, only exacerbating preexisting EU tensions over debt and Brexit. Germany in particular, given its predominant economic and political role in Europe, incurs blame from its neighbors for being the driver of massive immigration, worsening existing resentments over past north-south financial bailouts and Brexit. Any solution to European migration lies with Berlin.

Recommendations

The historic components to successful immigration are age-old and time-tried. Immigration that is legal, diverse, moderate, and meritocratic leads to rapid assimilation and enhances the vitality of the host—and should be the goal of any immigration policy. Its antitheses—illegal, monolithic, massive, haphazard, and non-meritocratic immigration—delay integration, spike social welfare costs, cause massive class resentments in the host country, and fuel political instability and factionalism. Rapid technological changes in automation and robotics somewhat lessen reliance on imported unskilled labor; focus on knowledge-based and computer skills increases the desirability of educated immigrants.