

The Impossible Courtship

Cultural division in the Western Hemisphere

Book review by Donald A. Collins

Harrison, a Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Studies at MIT, knows his subject first hand, serving between 1965 and 1981 as a director of five missions in Latin America for the U.S. Agency for International Development. In this, his third major book, his purpose is to deal with the very difficult and controversial subject of why extensive American efforts to forge a Western Hemisphere community have not yet succeeded. For example, efforts under both Bush and Clinton have suffered greatly because of Mexico's economic and political crisis.

Earlier, JFK and FDR tried an "Alliance for Progress" and a "Good Neighbor Policy" which ended in the cemetery of frustrated Pan American dreams.

Harrison, with excellent documentation, outlines why the U.S. and Canada are prosperous First World countries with centuries old democratic institutions, while Latin American countries are poor and, in most cases, experimenting with democratic capitalism for the first time.

The key question: Can we reasonably expect to construct a Western Hemisphere version of the European Union (which has been successful, albeit with many traumas) from such different cultural, economic and political backgrounds?

A central contrast between these two very different cultures, Harrison notes, is the Hispanic/Catholic tradition of the one and the English/Protestant background of the other. In the latter case, a few mentioned by the author are: a

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history of work ethic, educational priority, rewards based not on caste or position but on merit, a true sense of community obligation (as reflected in our strong private charities), a high sense of personal ethics, and a healthy competition before granting democratic authority.

In short, says Harrison, if we are to succeed in melting these obdurate cultures, we must acquire a sense of shared values and institutions. However, it will doubtless take leadership different than that evidenced — in Mexico, for example — which has shown the antithesis of all the values mentioned in the preceding paragraph. If Latin America does not

produce political and intellectual leaders who can confront the traditional values and attitudes largely responsible for the region's underdevelopment by making sweeping reforms in education and child rearing practices, this long-standing Pan American dream will remain just that.

One of the worst results of this flawed leadership can be seen in the efforts of Mexico, Cuba and other governments to shunt

excess (read "unemployed, undereducated, unwanted") populations onto the United States. The response of our own leadership to this massive legal and illegal migration threat, truly a "silent invasion" which could not be accomplished by the Axis Powers in two World Wars in this century, has been evasive, feeble, politically driven by money and moral weakness.

The 1996 immigration reform legislation ignored the need to require proper identification for employees and failed to limit massive *legal* immigration, while pretending that the only problem was *illegal* immigration. This was the result of a conspiracy of venial interests, of the professional ethnic organizations without constituency but with massive money from Ford and other foundations, the Catholic Church, and greedy American companies which want to duck paying fair wages,

The Pan American Dream: Do Latin America's Cultural Values Discourage True Partnership with the U.S. and Canada?

by Lawrence E. Harrison
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but don't mind paying handsomely for political influence.

The solution is a political one, but not complicated. We need to guard our borders, including the internal borders of entitlement, by requiring citizenship ID for government and other benefits, while making sure that the cultural values which made us great are offered under a common language. If we dally as we are, the wake up call will

come, but too late for us to avoid reaching 500 million in population in the 21st Century, mostly of non-European origin.

If the 70 percent of Americans who want far less immigration don't step forward, the United States will soon take on so many from the Latin American culture that, as Harrison so eloquently warns, we too can share in their failed systems and begin the sad downhill trek toward Third World status. **TSC**

The Challenges of People on the Move

Migration raises political, economic, moral issues

Book review by David Payne

This is a book about problems, not solutions. If you are looking for a clear exposition of the problems of migration, then look no further, for Weiner sets them out in exquisite detail. There is a need for this type of exposition, for how can we answer problems we do not fully understand? If, on the other hand, you are looking for solutions once you understand the problems, you will be disappointed, for Weiner does not see his mission as one of providing answers to the hard questions he analyzes. His thoroughness is evident in the topics discussed briefly below.

Migration is a worldwide problem — a problem not limited merely to advanced industrial countries. In the recent past, world population movements were not considered threatening, at least as long as economies were growing. Refugee flows were seen as the main problem, particularly after World War II. Beginning in the early 1970s, though, a change began to take place. Labor markets narrowed, making jobs less available; yet migration continued unabated. As governments began to restrict immigration, *illegal*

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The Global Migration Crisis
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immigration became a problem along with political asylum. Moreover, as world populations continue to increase, population and migration issues become more and more linked to issues of national defense and social welfare. These issues arise with respect to both emigration and immigration.

Emigration is often a foreign policy tool of the sending governments, used in order to gain explicit objectives. But even when this is not overtly the case, emigration has been regarded as a means of extending political and cultural influence. (Example: the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, an organization supported by the Indian government, promotes Indian culture in the U.S.) *Restricting* emigration has its own intricate motivations. In addition to forced and restricted emigration, governments sometimes encourage emigration for macroeconomic goals such as partial relief for unemployment. Weiner gives three major reasons why a government might encourage emigration:

- Governments encourage migration to ease unemployment among the lower-income, less skilled classes rather than from among the better-educated. At times, though, even the better-educated are encouraged to leave — this when there are too many well-educated individuals in a particular field. (But,

more insidiously, where the drain is only to eventually bring back technological secrets, e.g., a Pakistani nuclear physicist who acquired nuclear technology while working in the Netherlands).

- Governments sometimes encourage a flow of people out of the country when doing so results in a flow of money back into the country from those very people in the form of support for families left behind.
- Sometimes states encourage emigration as a means of handling the cost of social welfare, e.g., England's exiling criminals to Australia and Castro's emptying his prisons into the U.S.

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Emigration, then, can give a sending country great political clout, and because of this (as well as for the other reasons) is often actively promoted. It is because of the benefits of emigration to the sending country that Weiner sees a potential source of conflict as industrialized countries begin to tighten immigration policies. The extreme form of this is the “politically explosive” demand (maybe “politically suicidal” would be a better term) for a “new international demographic order in which people from low-income countries would be readily admitted into countries that are well-off” (p.43).

Receiving countries obviously should keep the policies of sending countries in mind when developing their immigration policies. It is a well-known fact that immigration can change the ethnic composition of a country and can thereby lead to a change in political power. In a nation-state minorities have traditionally been *expected* to become fully assimilated, but this concept of cultural homogeneity has come under attack recently with the rise of multiculturalism, which claims to be a positive force in

accepting cultural diversity. It can, however, also be a form of enforced separation and as such can be a tool for aiding the return of migrants to their homeland and even an aid in persecuting such groups. As an example of its double-edged nature: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was widely criticized for assisting displaced persons in Bosnia who sought to leave, saying that it was aiding the policy of ethnic cleansing by facilitating their departure.

Is there a threshold of acceptable migration? Weiner's answer is: “It depends.” There are so many different factors — economic, social, political, cultural, environmental — that it is impossible to give a clear answer. “What can be said with certainty is that every country does have a limit on the number and composition of immigrants that it finds acceptable” (p.92). The capacity of a society to absorb migrants is largely determined by three factors: first, the *willingness* of the society to absorb them; second, the structure of the labor market; and third, the commitment of the migrants to their new society. The first is the most critical, and Weiner spends some time examining different countries with respect to this: the United States, Germany, Israel, France, and Australia are all discussed.

With respect to the third point, the general observation is made that even if migrants segregate themselves, this is no barrier against assimilation so long as the children acquire the same education as others in the society. *If*, however, education is limited or if education takes place in the parent's language, which is different from the host country's, the children are handicapped in the labor market and assimilation is retarded. Multiculturalists assert that bilingual education is beneficial because it enables the migrant community to maintain its identity; while critics object that this does nothing but induce a sense of separateness, “marginalizing” the children of migrants on the labor market. Given the complexity of the issues involved, small wonder there are so many problems and conflicts.

By this time it should be obvious that migration flows can easily generate conflict between nations. Governments become concerned when other governments encourage the migration of significant numbers of people. Emigration and immigration policies are, and should be, shaped by concerns over internal stability and international security. Weiner argues that a narrow economic perspective will not,

by itself explain the different aspects of migration. Security and stability perspectives must be taken into account in order to truly grasp the situations that are occurring worldwide. Economic theories neglect two critical political elements:

- 1) population movements often occur for reasons that have nothing to do with economics;
- 2) even if movements are induced by economic means, governments are often decisive in whether their citizens will be permitted to leave (or enter) and governmental decisions are often not economic.

There are several bad explanations for why countries accept or reject migrants, but one of the best explanations has to do with ethnic affinity. "A government and its citizens are more likely to be receptive to those who share the same language, religion, or race and to regard others as threatening" (p.136).

The problem of refugees adds yet another twist to an already complex situation. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is the primary international organization for dealing with and setting policies for migrants, is guided by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which was expanded and modified in 1967. The convention defines a refugee as a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (p.151). This definition, says Weiner, is the centerpiece of international law dealing with refugees. There is always a division between those emphasizing the rights of individuals and those insisting on the rights of states. The former position, in its most extreme, is the position calling for open borders. Various international agreements prohibit discrimination against migrants on grounds of race, sex, language, and religion. Other agreements have been signed that protect refugees. "Recent statements from officials of the UNHCR emphasize the 'right to remain' as a fundamental human right" (p.154). Refugees are also accorded protection against expulsion by the principle of "non-refoulement" (to refoul is to return a refugee home). Again, those emphasizing individual rights would make this a blanket guarantee, but there are obvious problems.

When we turn from questions of policy to questions of morality in the migration topic we encounter similar complexities. The moral questions raised by migration are actually quite clear, but the debate is muddled by poor terminology and emotionalism. One of the fundamental questions in this moral morass is the question: which is primary,

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the needs and interests of individual countries or those of the migrants? To make matters worse, emigration is widely regarded as a matter of human right while immigration is regarded as a matter of national sovereignty. Because of these problems it is important, in trying to understand moral reasoning, that a distinction be made between personal morality and the application of moral principles to public policy. As Weiner rightly points out, "The moral choices we make as individuals need not, and often should not, be the same as the moral choices made by policymakers" (p.172).

A further distinction is also useful, viz., that between "the ethics of ultimate ends," which deals with absolute ideals, and "the ethics of responsibility," which deals with choices in the real world. "Policymakers must consider not simply whether policies are in some abstract sense moral but also whether there is a reasonable likelihood that morally desirable objectives can be achieved" (p.173). We must also distinguish between unjust policies and injustices in the implementation of policies — they are not necessarily connected.

With these points in mind, Weiner goes on to consider some specific policy issues from a moral perspective. For example, there is the issue of open vs. closed borders. The argument for open borders is most powerfully argued when based on John Rawls' (*Theory of Justice*) arguments having to do with "blind contractors." This is the liberal position and is often used to justify the concept of open borders as the only just position. Yet contrary positions have been

argued, claiming that open borders actually lead to great injustices, e.g., Michael Walzer (*Spheres of Justice*). Walzer bases his position on the notion that countries are like clubs that can and should regulate admissions. By contrast, "globalists" dismiss the idea of community, claiming such actually to be an impediment to a just world. They claim that political order, political institutions, the cultural identity and the well-being and interests of a nation's citizens are all subordinate to the moral claims of distributive justice.

The received position with respect to closed borders is that no country is obligated to admit individuals seeking employment, higher income, or a better way of life. The claim is often made that it is morally questionable to refuse to allow one class of migrants on the basis of race, religion or culture, but that "preferential policies" are morally acceptable (Israel for Jews, Germany for Germans, etc.). Weiner sees (at least I think he sees) that these are not truly distinct. "The line between preferences and discrimination, ...is a morally thin one that is easily crossed" (p.182).

Weiner returns to the question of a definition of refugee when addressing the issue of moral claims for protection. Human rights activists are constantly trying to broaden the definition of refugee. Under some proposed guidelines almost everyone has

reason to apply for refugee status since almost everyone is discriminated against by somebody at some time. There are objections to broadening the definition, though. We run the risk of trivializing the definition if it includes too many people. There is also the fact that the more liberal the definition becomes the more a nationalist regime is apt to engage in "ethnic cleansing."

Overall, Weiner gives a thorough account of the problems, (political, economic, and moral) that arise due to migration. He brings interesting issues to light, and shows the possible consequences of different migration-related policies, many of which are not obvious until he raises them. Yet not once does he attempt to take a moral stand or support a moral argument on these issues. Some may see this as simply the epitome of objective reporting, but I always feel cheated when an author refuses to take a position, hiding behind the smokescreen of objectivity. Surely Weiner has positions on these issues. And if he is as scrupulous in laying out answers as he is in analyzing the questions, they would make interesting reading indeed.

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