

Confronting America's 'Open Borders' Challenge

The ideological context of Labor's defection

by Miles D. Wolpin

The adverse consequences of mass immigration and majority support for restrictive reforms should elicit elite responsiveness in a democratic system.

Similarly, trade unions have historically reflected their members concerns by seeking to protect job security. What ideological, identity and coalitional factors explain the intensity of opposition — now reinforced by the AFL-CIO — to effective border control? Can a defense of national sovereignty be successful in the new millennium?

Recent poll data indicates growing citizen concern over urban sprawl and demographic congestion. By the same token, surveys have revealed rather consistent public support for a *more* restrictive policy toward immigration — the major source of urban and national population increase.

Given this simple relationship, why have our state and national elites evidenced such studied indifference or even hostility to countering this silent invasion of close to 1.5 million per annum? Other than largely symbolic acts (e.g., moderately heightened border patrol manpower or the denial of drivers licenses to illegals), no effective measures have been adopted in recent years to restore

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the integrity of citizenship. Most efforts have been rebuffed, ruled unconstitutional or rolled back.

In a nutshell, the explanation is anything but simple. Like abortion and other highly controversial issues, there are intrinsic complexities that contribute to a full understanding of elite behavioral differences. Several of these are highlighted below.

Recent decisions by the AFL-CIO to embrace high levels of immigration signal an abrupt turn away from Labor's traditional role as protector of jobs.

Globalism vs Nationalism

One major source of diversity which emerged first within liberalism and subsequently sharply divided conservatives pertained to the relative value assigned to

nationality and the nation state. Internationalism began to become a major force in liberalism more than a century ago.

World War II, and particularly the Cold War, brought most conservatives on board. Reinforcing this internationalist trend was the growing influence upon liberals of socialistic egalitarian and statist ideas in the early 1930s. A parallel emerging faith in global "free markets" was championed by business-oriented conservatives as well as a generation of Vietnam era ex-liberals (neo-conservatives).

Thus, while the socio-economic frame of reference differs, dominant elites in both liberal and conservative sectors have firmly embraced a globalist paradigm. Hence, migration, overpopulation and economic growth as well as human rights, poverty, etc. are viewed as essentially international phenomena requiring only global institutional approaches.

Within both major ideological traditions however, there are sectors which in varying degree reject the "globalist" claim that global "interdependence" has all but rendered the nation-state obsolete if not downright anachronistic. Thus, some pro-labor liberal Democrats

have vigorously opposed Clinton's NAFTA and China-trade initiatives. Among socio-cultural conservatives, identification with our nation-state and the need to preserve its sovereignty as well as its protective role is even more intense.

Notwithstanding the most reasoned critiques of globalist assumptions, we cannot expect conservative or liberal internationalists to be responsive to those favoring primacy for *national* demographic, cultural or economic

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security issues. Worse, our media, "informed" public opinion, educational institutions, major corporations, and both major parties are for the most part dominated by these cosmopolitan elements. This notwithstanding mass opinion which tends to favor immigration control, trade protectionism and avoidance of military interventionism abroad.

Unfortunately, like population control, these issues are not very salient for poorly informed, increasingly cynical and marginally competent mass publics. Only the "checks and balances" dimension of our governmental structure and occasional recalcitrance abroad, enables nationalist sectors to limit or moderate the internationalist jihad.

Why Has Globalism Become the Dominant 'Conservative' Ethos?

Two post World War II developments played a major role in the globalist takeover of American conservatism. First was the fear of Communism. This resulted in support for global politico-military alliances and ubiquitous interventionism. Indeed, during the Vietnam era it attracted an impressive contingent of moderate liberals, who now with new recruits are virtually hegemonic neo-conservatives in the Republican Party. They have actively sought new superpower missions in the post Cold War era.

As the ferocity of their vitriolic denunciations of Pat Buchanan's "isolationism" reveal, these sectors are tenaciously committed to a globalist ethos which encompasses institutionalized alliances, and "foreign aid." The former, in turn, tend to be more politically effective when there is hospitality to foreign nationals including aspiring immigrants. Driving this globalism are free trade ideology, the transnationalization of U.S.-based major corporations, our economy's growing dependence upon foreign credit and investment, etc. — powerfully reinforcing and targeted for corporate-oriented sectors

Thus a second imperative is global "growth" maximization — free market ideology's *deus ex machina* — which implies an absence of restraints or taxes upon cross-border movements of factors of production. Because this lowers costs, there has been tenacious opposition to both tariffs and immigration restrictionism as the globalization of the world economy progressed during the last three decades. While not invariably successful, Washington's politico-military intervention — and the institutional panoply (IMF, WB, WTO, NAFTA, NATO) it dominates — is intended to promote such "open" and ordered economies abroad. Ironically, the AFL-CIO has for many decades participated in this overall effort to weaken socialist and nationalist unions abroad. Of late, it has been blithely assumed that the export and/or imposition of controlled formal "democracies" will promote these "conservative" goals!

Have the Liberals Become Fellow-Travelers?

If "old fashioned" patriotic nationalism appears archaic to globally connected neo-conservative elites whose friends and money are increasingly abroad, the hiatus is even more extreme for egalitarian-oriented welfare-statist liberals. In addition to being "soft" on Communists during the Cold War era, contemporary libereleites in government, media and academia matured during the Vietnam era when Third Worldism combined with Civil Rights guilt complexes synergistically alienated them from the traditions and institutions of middle America. Consequently, since the 1970s, if not before, they have become soft toward culturally radical deconstructionists of American identity.

The upshot has been an unquestioning embrace of "multiculturalist" ideology and a utopian humanitarian commitment to the universalization or imposition of

Western-derived “human rights” norms regardless of national cultural diversity let alone frontiers. Among the more militant “Liberals,” there is a decided anti-Euro-American animus manifested by an unquestioned belief that virtually all of the problems of non-whites are due to exogenous oppression.

Thus “immigrants’ rights” have become sacrosanct regardless of illegal status or their effects upon American citizens. Coalitions have been promiscuously forged with radical minority activists and ethnic elites. The rule of law has been impugned by advocacy of affirmative action, enforcement double standards, and concessions when anti-white militants threaten violence. Trade unions have been viewed as organizations to be penetrated from above and taken over from top to bottom by “oppressed” groups or their white radical sycophants in a drive for hegemony vis-à-vis Euro-Americans.

For these “Liberal” reductionists, the route to a global utopia is international solidarity with romanticized people of color, and an eventual takeover of the free market inter-governmental organizations that set rules for the international system. More moderate liberals or neo-conservatives who are inclined to question politically correct assumptions (e.g., the desirability of affirmative action or open borders) are ubiquitously intimidated by the threat of demonic invective (e.g., “racist”). The latter, of course, is tantamount to career suicide or a bad corporate image.

As equal protection double standards erode the rule of law and the demographic balance shifts, the multicultural “Liberal” jihad intensifies its attack not only upon remaining traditional ideas, symbols and institutions, but it also simultaneously endeavors to denude American citizenship of its European ethno-cultural content and obligations.

Has Organized Labor Defected?

Since the 1960s the ethnic and racial composition of organized labor has become less Euro-American. This demographic change has been especially pronounced among unions organizing large numbers of semi- or unskilled workers. These include UNITE, the Teamsters, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers, the United Food and Commercial Workers, SEIU and of course, the tiny and almost wholly Hispanic United Farm Workers.

Thus during the past two decades it is unsurprising

that Labor’s welfare-state-oriented elites and staff have gradually assimilated a multiculturalist/immigrant rights commitment. This in turn was — despite some resistance and operational contradictions — catalyzed by an intimate and uncritical embrace of affirmative action-oriented civil rights elites since the 1960s. Also integral to Labor’s “new unionism” were multitudes of Vietnam-era Third Worldist radicals who entered organized labor as militant organizers, activists and staff in the 1970s and early 1980s. Some percolated up in the previously mentioned unions, while others became active at urban, county and state levels. With John Sweeney’s 1995 election as federation president, a number of these and

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other radicals were appointed to federation staff positions.

The departure of Labor from historic protectionism of employment opportunity and security for American workers was first apparent fifteen years ago. The AFL-CIO acquiesced in a massive congressional “one-time” amnesty for millions of illegals in exchange for easily-evaded employer sanctions legislation. While Labor has continued to oppose agricultural “guest worker” programs and other “temporary” urban largely skilled employee quotas, the latter have gradually increased over the past decade. This despite one or two modest Labor victories on the issue.

More striking has been the AFL-CIO’s tacitly growing sympathy since the mid-1980s for the mass influx of both legal and illegal unskilled workers who constitute — with their relatives — approximately 80 percent of the current immigrant total. And this, in turn, is the primary source of American demographic increase (about 70 percent) and racial transformation. Nor have there been any Labor demands that economic (i.e., labor market) consequences be governing criteria for immigration policy. The latter has been driven by a motley congerie of employer, ethnic and Realpolitik

interests.

Hence at the close of the 1980s, the federation “sat on its hands” as the 1990 Immigration Reform and Control Act’s amendments — increasing quotas by over a quarter of a million — were pushed through Congress. By the late 1990s the federation was assisting “open borders” lobbyists intent on reversing 1996 amendments which targeted alien criminals and incentives for illegals.

More recently there has been an intense drive by California-based Hispanic militants and their multiculturalist Liberal allies within the AFL-CIO to end support for even nominal employer sanctions (vis-à-vis illegals). Associated objectives include less enforcement funding for INS, an end to interagency cooperation, and another massive amnesty — thus strengthening the magnet for new illegal aliens. The latter’s status should be equivalent to that of a citizen. At the AFL-CIO’s February 2000 Executive Council meeting, a resolution embodying these and related policies was unanimously adopted. Given the federation’s dominant civil rights/multiculturalist ideology, recalcitrant labor elites risked demonization as “racists.”

This takes place notwithstanding decades of decline in private sector union members as a percentage of the labor force. By the end of 1999, it had plummeted to 9.4 percent, an all-time low. That decline is due in part to free trade outsourcing and intense employer hostility to unionization. But beyond yet related to this, labor market inundation by unskilled migrants has also made organizing, collective bargaining and successful striking more difficult in this context. The immigrant flood of unskilled job seekers also accounts for a quarter of the decline in real wages as well as contributing to economic insecurity, disproportionate criminality, poverty and increased competition for welfare-state expenditures.

Without even adding the member alienation engendered by this de facto “open borders” permissive elite posture on immigration in conjunction with militant intra-union affirmative action discrimination, one can pose the question whether Labor’s radicalization is contributing

to its own long term decline as a major liberal force in American politics?

By becoming more internationalist, weakened national unions don’t necessarily increase their effectiveness in defending members where union density is on the wane. Hence advocating the inclusion of symbolic or largely unenforceable labor standards and human rights guarantees in international trade agreements is unlikely to vitiate an erosion of domestic bargaining power, let alone alienation of a substantial

sector of its constituency. While in the short run an end to nominal employee sanctions may facilitate the organization of some illegals, on a longer horizon this and an amnesty will be counterproductive for organizing and bargaining leverage by inflating rather than tightening labor markets.

Illustrative of organized labor’s bargaining power decline has been the sharp downturn in its ability to wage successful strikes to increase wages or prevent the erosion of fringe benefits. Nor have contracts over the past decade improved living standards.

By barely keeping up with inflation but not productivity, they explain in conjunction with outsourcing why the unemployment decline has not sparked inflation.

Indeed, most of the new jobs created in the past decade for wage earners have been non-union “bad” ones — temporary, part-time, low wage, or fringe benefitless. It is no wonder that almost three-quarters of 18-34 year old workers claim they don’t have enough to live on! For it is here that the migratory influx competes most intensely with unskilled Americans and particularly black citizens.

Even among skilled and professional sectors, there has been a dramatic rise in underemployment due to Labor’s weakness in the legislative arena. Today, almost 50 percent of academics under 35 are of non-American origin. And this is increasingly the case in other professional sectors too where affirmative action preferences — as among the unskilled — are used to discriminate not only against whites but also to the detriment of increasingly resentful black Americans. The

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latter is intensified by anti-American discriminatory practices integral to ubiquitous network hiring among illegals and legal migrants.

The Temporal Dilemma and Balkanization Prospects

Three cardinal political maxims are central to the foregoing patterns. First, mass organizations (e.g., unions) are elite-dominated. Second, short term elite interests generally predominate. Third, intense organized minority concerns (e.g., employer, ethnic) tend to supervene antithetical majoritarian aspirations which are not particularly salient for the mass constituency (e.g., union members, the electorate).

To become behaviorally operative, the alien influx must be perceived as *directly affecting* ordinary citizens' economic security and/or quality of life. There is an aversion, often coupled with a lack of intellectual ability, when it comes to fathoming indirect relationships. Hence, until a sharp economic downturn and/or mass ethno-racial violence occur, the prospects for immigration control reformers will remain problematic.

In such circumstances localized Euro-American protests are certain to evoke intensified reactive ethno-racial militancy. Yet in the absence of a unified nationalist movement characterized by strong populist commitments and charismatic leadership, it is unlikely that a growing border control constituency will be effectively mobilized. Such a broad-based national movement is essential if the dominant Liberal and neo-conservative elites are to be dislodged from their stranglehold over our major institutions.

If and when such a process begins to unfold, there will be considerable defection within labor, the media and our political system as well as its coercive apparatus by less ideological and more opportunistic elements. This

will be facilitated by the fact that nation states and traditional institutions — despite some weakening in recent decades — remain as powerful underpinnings of middle class identification, loyalties and legitimacy. Hence their appeal will fuel the nascent patriotic

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movement.

Without considerable unity, however, the latter is unlikely to prevail. Religious traditionalists are an important constituency. So are national-oriented environmentalists. Can a reasonable compromise be struck on the inflammatory “choice” (abortion) issue? Almost as vexing is the conflict among nationalists over the issue of ethno-cultural and racial exclusiveness. Ultimately, as the stridency of anti-Euro-American entitlement demands intensify while the demographic balance deteriorates, our survival as one rather than several nations will hinge upon whether and how such conflicts are resolved.

Beyond the transcendence of these tensions are such crucial matters as coordination, tactical adroitness and above all, new leadership. Charismatic leaders have been essential to all successful citizen-based nationalist movements. €