

Is Deporting 11 Million Aliens and Building a Wall Feasible?

In defense of Donald Trump — as if he needs it!

By JOHN THOMPSON

I usually start with a little sympathy for journalists who do not like Donald Trump when they try to analyze his pronouncements and to explain his success. Not only does Trump refuse to engage the media on its preferred terms, but — most galling of all — he knows how to use the media to his own ends. You might even manage an extra measure of sympathy for angry and frustrated journalists locked in an echo chamber on 43rd Street as they watched a man they hold in contempt lock up the nomination of a major political party and draw even with his presumptive Democratic opponent in the polls. Worse still, they are starting to realize that the kinds of people rallying to his cause, whom they also hold in contempt, might be numerous enough to elect him. It must be very upsetting.

Consider *The New York Times'* article “What Would It Take for Donald Trump to Deport 11 Million and Build a Wall?” by Julia Preston, Alan Rappoport, and Matt Richtel of May 19, 2016. My initial sympathy evaporated, though, after the first three paragraphs when I began asking myself “Haven’t I read this article hundreds of times in the past year?” Upon further examination the answer appears. No. This is the 100th article. They only appear to be the same because they all follow the same script:

First, brand Trump as a demagogue, who panders to the darkest impulses of his followers with irresponsible promises (linking Trump to the “Alt Right” movement is but one example);
Second, try to discredit his positions using a series of quotes from people who do not like him and/ or disagree with him.

John Thompson, a Boston-based consultant on economics and finance, is a member of the Massachusetts Coalition for Immigration Reform (MCIR). This article does not necessarily represent the views of the MCIR.

The only way this piece deviates from the template is that the usual paragraph attributing Trump’s rise to the pathology of angry straight white males facing imminent extinction is missing, probably due to space considerations.

The substantive assertions in the article are that 1) Trump has made irresponsible promises to his followers and 2) it is unanimously agreed by experts that his claims are irresponsible. Neither assertion can stand scrutiny.

Let me begin by suggesting a simple alternative to the “Trump the demagogue” explanation of his rise, which still seems to prevail at the *Times*. To wit, he won because 1) voters agree with his stand on immigration, 2) he was effective in communicating his position to the voters, and 3) the voters trusted him.

For more than a decade, opinion polls show that a solid majority of voters — and an overwhelming majority of Republicans — support a tough stance toward both illegal and legal immigration. Meanwhile, many voters are exasperated because it seems that the politicians conspire to keep them from voting on the issue. It is easy enough to understand Democratic politicians salivating at the prospect of 12 million new Democrats. What is harder to tolerate is that business interests closely linked to the Party’s donors continue blocking enforcement while obtaining various special programs to bring in cheap labor legally. And, they are not very subtle about it.

During the debate on the Gang of Eight bill voters could observe Republican leaders apparently making promises to donors to push the bill through the House. During the same debate, the prestige press continually misled the public about what was actually in the Gang of Eight bill, namely immediate unconditional legalization for all illegals with vague promises of future enforcement *plus* a doubling of legal immigration. The press never thought it worth mentioning that the Gang of Eight bill would bring in up to 20 million new “guest workers,” but kept intoning “comprehensive immigration reform.”

Undoubtedly, the press would have been fairer to

those seeking to limit immigration if the GOP leadership had shown more respect for their voters, opposed the Gang of Eight bill, and explained why. Instead, they supplied the media with a steady flow of copy on how Boehner, Cantor, McCarthy (remember them?), and Ryan had worked out a deal with the Chamber of Commerce with only a clique of retrograde conservatives standing in the way. They relented only when the voters sent Eric Cantor packing.

The voters quite reasonably concluded that more than a few Republican politicians are untrustworthy on immigration. The procedure is to say whatever it takes about securing the border during the campaign and then to give the donors what they want as soon the cameras are turned off and the votes are in. Eight years ago John McCain assured us he wanted to build a wall on the border, but as soon as he was no longer up for election he was pushing for amnesty. Marco Rubio first portrayed himself as tough on illegal immigration but then joined the Gang of Eight. Having thus fattened his war chest, in 2016 he ran for president, this time pledging to secure the border. When you lie this often, voters may not trust you anymore.

To paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld, you don't go into a political campaign with the party you wish you had but with the one you have. By the time we reached 2016, there were a large number of candidates (was it 16 or 17?) flush with money from the cheap labor lobby. Realizing that there was strong sentiment among the voters, they all promised to secure the border. Otherwise, they were all set to evade the issue of immigration as much as possible. The scenario called for Jeb or Marco to advocate "earned legalization" while Hillary pressed for the "pathway to citizenship." Whoever won, we could all look forward to lots of "guest workers" next year.

In summary, with voters aware that their position was being ignored by the established party leaders and their backers, there was an opening for someone with the audacity to raise the issue. There was also an opening for a candidate who could be trusted. Thus, Rubio may have had a well-considered plan for enforcement on his website, but by then we all knew that he lies.

If Trump were the authoritarian that he is often accused of being, he would have acted outside constitutional channels. Instead, he chose the ultimate democratic strategy of appealing directly to like-minded voters in open debate during contested primaries while emphasizing three easily understood pledges:

First, illegal immigration is not in our interest, and I pledge to stop it;

Second, I pledge a tough policy of enforcement culminating in deportation; and

Third, symbolizing the tough policy, I pledge to build a wall.

All the rest is details. You and I and all the voters understand what he is saying. It is about as simple as anyone can make it.

With one exception, most of the other candidates were evasive, promising stricter enforcement but not explaining how they would deal with the illegals now in the country. The exception of course is Ted Cruz, whose position was identical to Trump's, except that he wanted to deport all the illegals whereas Trump allowed himself some flexibility.

For the record Trump and Cruz finished first and second, respectively. Cruz was the movement conservative who had angered the GOP leaders in Congress. Trump was the pragmatic moderate with lots of appeal to independents and Democrats. Both of them convinced the voters they could be trusted. The two candidates who took a clear tough stance on immigration crushed all the others, and it wasn't even close.

At a minimum, Trump has offered the American people a chance to decide what they want done about immigration despite the best efforts of the Republican donors and their media allies to deny them that choice. It is a fair bet that if he wins in November his supporters will hold him accountable for making good on his pledge to secure the border, reduce illegal immigration, and re-orient immigration policy toward the interests of American workers. They are likely to be more relaxed about whether Mexico actually does pay for the wall.

TRUMP AND DEPORTATION

The second major contention in the article is that Trump's plan is obviously unworkable and there is near unanimous agreement among experts that it is unworkable. If that were true, the "Trump the demagogue" hypothesis might be tenable.

Of course, it is not true. The authors must know that there are numerous individuals and organizations that advocate reforms in immigration policy broadly in line with Trump's, and that these positions are spelled out in books, articles, pamphlets, and websites. If the authors do not know this, they should not have written the article. Furthermore, his specific proposals are not radically different from those of other Republican politicians who have spoken on the issue, as will be explained below.

The authors begin by mischaracterizing his positions, saying "Mr. Trump has a simple plan to reduce the population of 11 million immigrants living illegally in the United States: Deport them." A glance at Trump's website does not support this contention. Question: Did any of the three authors or the fact checkers bother to look at Trump's website? It took me almost two minutes, but I am sure that there are people at the *Times* who are better at computers than I am. Furthermore, they are paid to do it and I am not.

What his website does is to enumerate measures on enforcement similar to those espoused by Rubio, Bush, Christie, and Cruz (and possibly other GOP candidates whose sites have since been shut down) to secure the border and prevent employers from hiring illegal aliens. Four years ago Romney proposed a similar plan.

The pledge by every Republican, including Trump, to resume enforcement of the law is only intelligible in the context of the present state of enforcement. Specifically, for decades enforcement has been lax, allowing millions of people to enter the country illegally while not proceeding proactively against those who were in the country illegally or against employers who hire illegals. In 2012 the Obama Administration weakened enforcement even further by making it a policy to deporting only convicted criminals. (In fact, the Administration's policy allows substantial numbers of illegal felons to remain.) Obama's actions of 2012 as well as his 2014 executive order giving work permits and social benefits to some illegals are under challenge in the courts.

Once a political decision is made to resume enforcement, as all Republicans have promised to do, the issue arises of how to deal with the millions of people who are here illegally. Logically, to state that you will enforce the law means that you will begin a process that eventually ends with deportation, since the law says that illegals should be deported. If you doubt my words, allow me to quote testimony in 1995 by the late Rep. Barbara Jordan (D-Texas):

Deportation is crucial. 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. The top priorities for detention and removal, of course, are criminal aliens. But for the system to be credible, people actually have to be deported at the end of the process.

What Trump said was that he would resume enforcement — and therefore necessarily deportation — while allowing some illegals who were deserving of special consideration to remain. Cruz said the same thing except he would not allow any to remain. The other candidates said that they wanted enforcement but were evasive on deportation. Yet, it is Trump who is accused of being vague and inconsistent. Did anyone in the media ask Republican candidates about this apparent contradiction, or do they save all the tough questions for Donald Trump?

The fact that one is willing to accept deportation as a part of the policy is not equivalent to promising to deport every last illegal. As Romney said four years ago, once it is clear that there will be no amnesty and the law will be enforced and they cannot obtain work, many — if not most — of the illegals will leave voluntarily. The exact policy might be a mix of partial legalization, voluntary

departures, and deportation. Conversely, if you are not willing to pursue a policy that includes deportation, you prefer amnesty or some euphemism for amnesty, even though nobody said so. Anyway, Trump and Cruz came in first and second while the evasive people have long since disappeared.

The authors then produce a series of quotes from selected experts raising various logistic aspects of securing the border. If the authors are arguing that all border enforcement is impossible, they should not be arguing with Trump but with virtually every Republican officeholder or candidate who has spoken on the issue plus the Republicans in both chambers of Congress. Actually, Democrats usually say that they are in favor of securing the border, but personally I don't believe them.

The authors conclude by citing an estimate by The American Action Forum that pursuing deportations would take 20 years and cost \$400 billion, which is supposed to settle the question definitively. Of course, these numbers only have meaning if they are placed in some context. Since the alternative to enforcement is amnesty, the logical basis for comparison is with the cost of amnesty. How much does it cost to deport these people versus the cost of allowing them to stay?

Fortunately, we have a yardstick of comparison. According to Jason Richwine and Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation, the net fiscal cost of legalizing the illegals in the country under the Gang of Eight bill would have been \$5.5 trillion. Assuming that both projections are accurate, the "Trump Plan" would achieve a savings of 92 percent over the Gang of Eight bill (i.e. \$400 billion vs. \$5.5 trillion.) It looks like a classic no-brainer. The facts seem to be shouting "Take the Trump Plan."

Incidentally, the fate of Richwine is instructive about the media's peculiar set of rules, which Trump has chosen to ignore. Jason and his co-author Robert Rector at the Heritage Foundation went about their work assiduously and produced a well-documented and conceptually sound analysis of the fiscal cost of the "Gang of Eight" Amnesty. He released his research for peer review and called a press conference to explain his findings to the press. The media then dug up some irrelevant facts about his background, which had no impact on the findings of his study or his integrity as a researcher or as an individual. The press fanned a medium-sized media storm and managed to get him fired. In addition to costing Jason his job, the media showed no interest whatever in his findings. So Jason plays by the rules and gets savaged. Meanwhile, the media are angry at Trump for being too shrewd to walk into that trap.

I could get my own set of experts from all over the United States to contradict the experts quoted against Trump, but I do not get paid for this. Instead, let me offer a proposal. Why not solicit the opinion of disinter-

ested foreign experts who have dealt with a comparable challenge, specifically experts from Israel? According to the *New York Times*, it is a thriving democracy. That country is surrounded by unfriendly countries. It has a border with the West Bank, which is filled with hostile people, many of whom belong to and/or sympathize with groups that are willing to engage in or condone terrorist acts. Many of these people cross the border every day. Additionally, Israel must contend with economic migrants who are working illegally. Yet, in the past few years the Israeli government implemented programs that secured their border and deported large numbers of illegal immigrants. They must know some-thing. Just for a semblance of balance, why do the authors not ask a qualified Israeli expert whether our border can be secured?

THE WALL

Much of the rest of the article is aimed at convincing us that it is impractical to build a wall on the Mexican border. In all candor, I would not make a wall a major part of my program to secure the border. I assume that the authors are familiar with the engineering issues, which I am not. The article gives really silly detailed quotes from engineers and water experts who seem to be suggesting that Trump should change the height of his wall, change the route, or use different building

materials? Nevertheless, with all due respect to the *Times* staff, I am willing to wager that Trump, with his experience in the construction industry, can produce a group of engineers who can figuratively dance circles around the experts quoted in the article.

As was the case with securing the border, your quarrel is not with Donald Trump but with the U.S. Congress, which continues to appropriate money to build walls with bipartisan support. Therefore, it apparently believes that the wall does matter.

Once again the authors top it off by citing a final authority to settle the issue definitively, in this case Michael Dear, a professor at the University of California at Berkeley, who specializes in the border with Mexico and is the author of “Why Walls Won’t Work.” No doubt, Prof. Dear is a competent researcher and his views deserve due consideration.

But, just to be sure why not get a second opinion, and once again what better a source than Israel? After all, Israel claims one of the key elements in securing their border is their *wall*. In fact the attached website shows the wall off proudly and tells us that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is so pleased with his wall that he wants to make it even bigger. Is the Prime Minister on to something that the staff at the *Times* is not? <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/fence.html> ■

Israel Helping Kenya Build 440-Mile Anti-Terror Wall

By WAYNE LUTTON

Israel is lending its counter-terrorism expertise to Kenya by helping the African country build a 440-mile wall along its border with Somalia. The barricade is intended to help prevent Somali terrorists from infiltrating Kenya. During a trip to Kenya, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also promised that Israeli intelligence agencies will cooperate with Kenyan officials to detect terror attacks in the early stages of their planning.

Kenya has been the target of attacks by Somali terrorists in recent years. Jihadists from the Islamist Al-Shabaab group killed 67 people at a Westgate shopping center in Nairobi in 2013. In 2015, Al-Shabaab terrorists attacked Christians attending Garissa University, in northeast Kenya. Seven hundred students were taken hostage, with 148 of them killed. That attack was the deadliest terror incident in Kenya since the 1998 bombing of the United States Embassy in Nairobi.

Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto welcomed Israeli’s assistance. In a nationally televised speech, he said, “Whatever it is going to cost us and whatever it will take, we are going to make sure that our country is safe.” Interior Ministry Spokesman Mwenda Njoka told the IRIN News Agency that the 700-kilometer barrier will be built by the National Youth Service under supervision of the army and Israeli experts. He explained, “The wall is basically meant to limit illegal crossing and monitor movement of people....It will involve a combination of putting up obstacles and digging trenches, especially in areas which are not navigable, to prevent people from crossing into and from the country. There will be CCTV cameras powered by solar and a control centre manned by border patrol units.”

Tunisia has also announced plans to build a anti-terror wall along its border with Libya. That decision came in the wake of Islamic State’s attack on Sousse beach, where 30 British tourists were murdered. ■