

# Immigration Issues Internationally

## *Choices and Challenges*

BY PETER B. GEMMA

Over the past year I've had opportunities to travel abroad—to Europe and as far away as Egypt. On my trips, in my pre-travel research, and from foreign news reports, I gleaned some of the many roles immigration problems play on the world stage. There are lessons and ideas, especially in Europe, which I believe should be of interest to Americans.

The indisputable fact I knew even before any flight left the ground is that illegal immigration is a threat to the national security, economy, ecology, and culture of almost every nation. In 2006, pundit Rich Lowry observed:

Look at Europe. Muslim immigration is challenging the cultural identity of Holland and has created unpoliced no-go zones in the Paris suburbs. The nightmare is something similar happening here, unless we pause to culturally digest our recent immigrants. Harvard scholar Samuel Huntington, who presciently wrote of a “clash of civilizations” years before 9/11, warns of the threat to America’s national cohesion from an ever-growing, poorly assimilated Latino population.<sup>1</sup>

Times have changed a bit since Lowry’s admonition—slightly for the better in Europe but continuing downhill for the U.S.

In a way, some European politicians see the light or feel the heat regarding immigration. In 2008, Britain’s home secretary John Reid observed that managing immigration is, “the greatest challenge facing all European governments.” Former French President Jacques Chirac told listeners to his 2006 Bastille Day address, “Africans will flood the world and we have an immense

problem, which is that of development.” Earlier this year, a member of the Italian Parliament and immigration restrictionist, Federico Bricolo—while under fire from his political opponents—retorted: “You can call us xenophobic all you like, it only wins us more votes.”

Each European country faces distinct but similar issues regarding the influx of immigrants, and there are disparities in how nations view and handle the problem.

Sweden’s welfare system is the most generous in Europe—and its tax burden is the heaviest. It is also the country in Europe that opens its doors to the highest number of immigrants: Sweden now has more immigrants from Iraq than from neighboring Norway and Denmark combined. An immigrant who has a permanent residence permit automatically has the right to receive all the social welfare allowances Sweden offers. Although more than 10 percent of the nation’s population of nine million is foreign-born—in addition to an estimated 140,000 illegal aliens—politically, there is only a fledgling immigration reform movement.

More than 60 percent of the increase in newborns in Norway is due to immigration, the highest level since the 1970s. However, six out of every ten Norwegians are of the opinion that immigration is positive for the country, while only 23 percent are opposed according to a 2009 survey.

Denmark, by contrast, is offering immigrants from “non-Western” nations 100,000 Kroners (about \$20,000) if they voluntarily give up their legal residency and move to their native countries. The immigration reform Danish People’s Party, a coalition partner of the two ruling conservative parties of the Danish government, believes paying immigrants to leave Denmark will save the state money on social services. Kristian Thulesen Dahl, financial spokesperson of the party, opines: “It costs quite a lot to have maladjusted immigrants in Danish society.”<sup>2</sup> Funds have also been set aside for campaigns by local authorities who wish to encourage immigrants to leave the country.

Greece remains the principal point of entry for illegal aliens in Europe: Albanians form a sizable portion of

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immigrants trying to cross the border and most others come from North Africa and attempt to get into Greece via Turkey. The Research Institute for European and American Studies estimates that there are “One million illegal immigrants ‘in transit’ from Turkey to Europe and many of them will end up in Greece and allocate themselves in the newly founded ghettos in the centre of Athens, in the port of Patras, or in various locations in the countryside, thus adding up to the 2.5 million illegal aliens already present in Greece.”<sup>3</sup> *EU Business* reports that Greece experienced a nearly 50 percent increase in the number of illegal aliens in the first six months of 2009 than in the same period the previous year.<sup>4</sup>



The European Union, best known for policy indecisiveness and political impotence, boasts there were 106,200 illegal border crossings at the sea and land borders that were foiled by the EU last year. But those intercepted by the authorities constitute only a tiny fraction of the number of illegal immigrants believed to be in Europe. According to the British newspaper *The Guardian*, estimates of the number of illegal aliens within Europe vary dramatically: from three to eight million.<sup>5</sup> Incredibly, EU leaders believe that organizing charter flights to deport illegal immigrants will make a difference. This idea came up after France sent three Afghans back to their home country—Paris forged an agreement with London to share a charter flight, as the UK was also seeking to expel illegal immigrants to Kabul.

England’s new Minister for Immigration, Damian Green, is stressing the need for a wider network of inter-related law enforcement agencies to stay ahead of the influx of illegal aliens coming to the British Isles. Recently, however, three Supreme Court judges unanimously overturned Britain’s long-standing policy of refusing asylum claims by homosexuals on the grounds that they could avoid persecution at home by behaving

discreetly. Lord Rodger, one of the most senior judges in Britain, said homosexuals had a right to “live openly and freely.” Critics warned it may transform the United Kingdom—which is among the first nations to take such a position—into a leading destination for homosexual asylum seekers and those who will claim that status. Sir Andrew Green, chairman of England’s Migration Watch, reacted to the decision:

This could lead to a potentially massive expansion of asylum claims as it could apply to literally millions of people around the world. An applicant has now only to show that he or she is homosexual and intends to return and live openly in one of the many countries where it is illegal to be granted asylum in the U.K.<sup>6</sup>

In the U.S., by comparison, the number of gays and lesbians seeking asylum from repression in their native countries is on the rise—but still judged on a case-by-case basis. According to the *New York Daily News*:

While the petitions aren’t broken out by sexual orientation, anecdotal evidence suggests there are more gays and lesbians seeking safe harbor in the U.S. than in years past... Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, which also works to advance the rights of gays, bisexuals and transgendered people, told *Newsweek* the claims were ‘particularly intense this year [and] every year the number of cases grows,’ Minter says, referring not only to the cases it wins, but to the increasing number of inquiries received.<sup>7</sup>

Britain, like America, has a mix of muddled regulations and malfunctioning rules regarding illegal immigration. An investigation by London’s *Daily Telegraph* found that several entry points into England have no security agents in place. The paper discovered that, “At Holyhead Port in Wales, there is only enough staff to cover one in four shifts even though it is deemed high risk and 26 immigration offenders were caught there in one month alone. Other minor ports in Wales and the South West are not manned at all.” Also, according to the news report, “operations in Wales and the South West found some of the 17 airports and seaports in the region had either limited or no immigration officers.”<sup>8</sup>

The greatest proportion of Spain’s new immigrants come from Christian, Spanish-speaking Latin American countries, so the potential for a cultural clash is limited. But Spain now plays host to 1.5 million Muslims, most

of them of North African origin. According to a 2008 poll by the Real Instituto Elcano, 46 percent of Spaniards see immigration as a serious threat. In 2009, the number of illegal aliens trying to reach Spain dropped as the country intensified its coastal patrol and repatriations, according to Interior Ministry data. As opposed to half-measures on the U.S. border, the Spanish government employs stringent policies of border control that have held back illegal aliens. Following the lead—and trend—of local American governments ranging from Arizona to Hazleton, Pennsylvania, small jurisdictions such as the Catalan town of Vic have adopted ordinances to exclude illegal immigrants from benefiting from local services such as health benefits.

In the Netherlands last June, immigration reformists scored a stunning political upset over the long-ruling Christian Democrat party. Outgoing Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende was outmaneuvered on the campaign trail by calls for denying medical care to the children of illegal immigrants, and the direct linkage between immigration—legal and illegal—to national security as well as crime, in addition to the culture clash brought about by the growing practice of Islam in an historically Christian nation.

On-the-spot research in Paris (while on honeymoon—bless my bride for her indulgence) revealed some positive news about proactive immigration policies. The French government has cracked down on those making a profit from aiding and abetting illegal aliens, and there is even a quota for catching culprits: the target for 2010 is five thousand arrests. For promoting “the entry, movement or irregular [illegal] stay of a foreigner in France,” the penalty is up to five years in prison and a fine of 30,000 Euros (over \$40,000). Although few have actually had such a strict sentence imposed, the law has a chilling effect on open-border advocates. Catherine Coutelle, a Socialist lawmaker behind a bid to modify the law, protests that “In France today there is a real climate of intimidation against those who help [immigrants].” Immigration Minister Éric Besson calls the law “indispensable” in combating the invasion of illegal aliens.

With the number of practicing Muslims in France estimated to be at least five to seven percent of the population—more than the combined figures of Jews and Protestants—Besson defends the government’s actions in stark terms: “The Republic must, in particular, be interested in the link between immigration and integration and between immigration and national identity.” In parliamentary deliberations, Besson asserted, “Is patriotism something you like only when it is brandished by

Barack Obama?” In the same debate French Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy stated, “Nothing would be worse than denial” that the French and Europeans “feel that they are losing their identity.”<sup>9</sup>

The Sarkozy government has set a goal of expelling 30,000 illegal aliens this year and has increased penalties to five years in prison and a maximum fine of 15,000 Euros for those employing illegal immigrants. Former Prime Ministers Alain Juppé, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, and Dominique de Villepin have deplored the restrictions and regulations for stigmatizing migrants and especially Muslims. At more than six million, France has Western Europe’s largest Muslim minority population.

France and Britain have opened a new center in the French border town of Calais where many illegal immigrants from India and other parts of the world gather to try and make their way into Britain. The Joint Operational Coordination Center will allow greater intelligence sharing, a joint approach to border security, and inter-agency operations to counter illegal migration and break up international human trafficking rings.



**Muslim protesters in England take to the streets (left) and communists in southern Italy protest immigration reforms enacted in the wake of rioting immigrants (below).**



Currently, France's hard-line immigration minister is trying set in place legislation that would allow DNA testing of new arrivals. Éric Besson said the tests would establish which foreigners were claiming visas by making up fictitious family ties with those already settled in the country. The controversial law was tentatively approved by the French parliament over a year ago but does not come into effect until Besson actually signs the legislation. He has delayed doing so in face of protests by civil libertarians, pro-immigration advocates, and those seeking compromises. A government report said there was often doubt over the authenticity of papers in family applications for visas. It found that in African countries such as Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Togo up to 80 percent of birth and marriage certificates were forged.

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Italy's "push-back" policy to prevent illegal immigration has resulted in a significant drop in arrivals since it was launched last May. Under the controversial initiative, illegal aliens are rescued in international waters and taken back to Libya (Italy's main source of illegal immigration) where humanitarian organizations can vet their asylum claims. Despite severe criticism by Rome's left-wing politicians, the Catholic Church, humanitarian organizations, and the United Nations refugee agency—who claim there is not enough infrastructure to accommodate refugees in Libya—the Italian government remains resolute. Interior Minister Roberto Maroni declared: "The Italian model of fighting illegal immigration has produced exceptional results and we think it should be copied by other European countries."<sup>10</sup>

After a swift and stern police reaction to rioting by foreign workers in southern Italy last May, Interior Minister Moroni said about 750 illegal immigrants were transferred to holding centers for the process of deportation. He added that more than 300 aliens with regular permits left the small town of Rosarno, where the riots were centered, voluntarily with their own means to other destinations.

Britain's newspaper *The Telegraph* has noted: "The Northern League, an anti immigration party which has now become pivotal in Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's ruling coalition, has seen its support more than double in the last five years."<sup>11</sup>

Despite the electoral success of immigration reform parties in Italy, France, Hungary and elsewhere, much of the European press have dismissed and denounced immigration reformists in the manner of America's Southern Poverty Law Center (see Spring 2010 issue of *The Social Contract*: "Profiteers of Hate"). For example:

- Israel's *Haaretz*: "Xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and neo-fascist movements are flexing their muscles these days."

- Radio Netherlands Worldwide: "Dutch electorate votes right-wing and populist ... The Islam-bashing party has nearly trebled its number of MPs."

- *London Sunday Times*: "When the new European Union Members of Parliament of the BNP [British National Party] head for Brussels they will find they have a wide range of neo-fascist bedfellows."

- *Der Spiegel*: "German media commentators are worried about the resurgence of nationalism in Hungary and wonder whether its political system is strong enough to cope with the hate-filled polarization that has swept the country."

In spite of media critics and establishment political pressure, immigration reformists are more active and successful than ever. Generally speaking, illegal immigration into Europe has at least slowed in some areas for several reasons, including the down turn in the economy and stricter regulations on businesses that hire illegal aliens. According to Georges Lemaitre of the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "The first thing that affects migration is the fact employers do not want as many workers. They are not looking to hire as many immigrants, so this is the first thing that reduces the level of migration. The second is the fact immigrants themselves do not see many opportunities, so they themselves tend to come less often."<sup>12</sup>

Ultimately however, the European magnet for Third World immigrants continues to be a low fertility rate that is shrinking its historic European populations.

Father Piero Gheddo of the Vatican's Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, recently stated that the low birth rate of indigenous Europeans combined with

a huge wave of Muslim migrants with large families would “sooner or later” see Europe dominated by Islam. “The challenge must be taken seriously,” he said, “certainly from a demographic point of view, as it is clear to everyone that Italians are decreasing by 120,000 or 130,000 persons a year because of abortion and broken families—while among the more than 200,000 legal immigrants a year in Italy, more than half are Muslims and Muslim families, which have a much higher level of growth.”<sup>13</sup>

As Paul Demeny, Distinguished Scholar at the Population Council, points out, “Oswald Spengler’s prophecy may turn out to be correct after all: depopulation may be slow, rather than precipitous; it could indeed last for centuries. If Europe would prefer a different future for its descendants, corrective action cannot be delayed.”<sup>14</sup>

And that holds true for America as well. The U.S. expects a population explosion of 100 million people within 30 years and immigration will be responsible for two thirds of that surge. According to Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, “Fully one third of all the people ever to move to the United States, starting from the first Siberian to cross the Bering land bridge in search of game, have arrived since 1965.”<sup>15</sup>

Europe’s slow but steady turn-around on legal and illegal immigration policies is due in large part to direct political action. Germany’s *Deutsche Welle* newspaper reluctantly concedes, “Across Europe, support for populist parties is on the rise ... right-wing parties have made spectacular political gains across Europe.”<sup>16</sup>

New and strict Arizona’s laws dealing with illegal aliens as well as election surprises in early 2010 political contests point to some strengthening of the movement to restrict and regulate illegal immigration in America. This journal’s Managing Editor Kevin Lamb writes about a certain urgency in the political fight over immigration: “As radical groups gain additional support and ultimately wield further political leverage, Middle America will be eclipsed by well-managed, well-funded, highly-organized ethnic groups actively changing American society to the detriment of the national interest.”<sup>17</sup> ■

## Endnotes

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