

# The Long-Term Consequences of Mass Muslim Migration

BY THE EDITORS

One day after Omar Mateen, son of Afghani immigrants, pledged allegiance to ISIS and killed 49 people at an Orlando nightclub, the editors of *National Review* published their prescription for fighting Islamic extremism: Put more troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, arm the Kurdish rebels in their fight against the Syrian government, and discredit Islamic ideology through unspecified means that may involve speaking out against homophobia in Iran and Saudi Arabia.

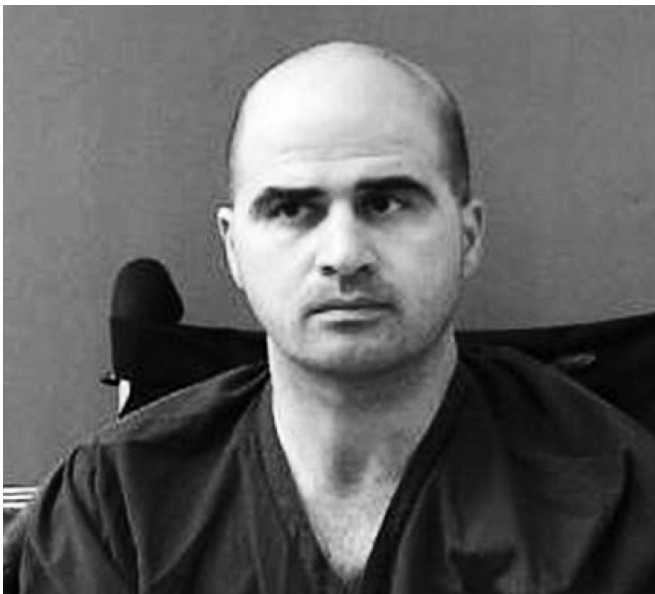
Immigration was not mentioned.

Perhaps this should not be surprising. Just after the massacre, the conventional wisdom quickly jelled that the carnage could not be blamed on immigration because Mateen was a natural-born citizen. To blame immigrants for the actions of a native is pure scapegoating, many in the professional commentariat insisted. Furthermore, they said, the incident should have no bearing on how many Syrian refugees we accept or on how we should structure immigration policy more generally.

That reaction illustrates the troubling tendency for people to view immigration as a one-time event with no

significant impact beyond the first generation. In fact, immigration policy is unique in its potential to effect long-term, multi-generational change. Omar Mateen is a second-generation immigrant, and he is only the latest example of a Muslim born and bred in a Western country who went on to commit terrorist acts. Many of the perpetrators of the Paris attacks last fall were native to Western Europe, as were the *Charlie Hebdo* attackers the year before. American-born Syed Farook and his Pakistani wife (whose entry into the U.S. was sponsored by Farook) killed 14 people in San Bernardino last December. The Center for Immigration Studies gives even more examples:

Nidal Hassan, who infamously killed 13 people in a mass shooting at Fort Hood in 2009, was born and raised in Virginia. Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez, who this past summer killed five soldiers at military installations in Chattanooga, Tenn., came to the United States as a young child. David Headley, a U.S. national formerly named Daood Sayed



Nidal Hassan



Omar Mateen

Gilani, helped plot the 2008 Mumbai attacks and other terrorist operations. One of the shooters earlier this year at the Curtis Culwell Center (where images of Muhammad were being displayed) was Texas-born Nadir Soofi. Soofi's two accomplices were American converts to Islam.

Seen in that context, it is obviously inadequate to insist that Syrian refugees and other Muslims have been "vetted." *Who is going to vet the second generation?*

To be fair, *National Review* followed up with another editorial noting the immigration connection to the shooting and calling for reductions in new green cards. Still, the editors rejected a Trump-style temporary ban on Muslim immigrants. Is such a ban needed?

A good starting point for answering that question is to examine the current Muslim population in the U.S. According to the most recent survey by the Pew Research Center, there were about 3.3 million Muslims living in the U.S. in 2015. In some ways that number is small. It amounts to just 1 percent of the U.S. population, and although Muslims are obviously not evenly distributed throughout the country, there are only a handful of places — "Dearbornistan" is an example — where they are present in large enough numbers to change the texture of daily life. We are still far away from having the many so-called "no-go" Muslim neighborhoods present in a country such as France, which Pew estimates to be 7 percent to 8 percent Muslim.

Nevertheless, 3.3 million people is still a substantial number in an absolute sense. Just because Muslims are far outnumbered by non-Muslims in the U.S. does not mean that the threat of terrorism is trivial. As we noted last year, "given that Islamic terrorism involves highly organized international networks with far-reaching propaganda, even a very small number of extremist Muslims can cause lasting damage." In the year since we wrote that, Syed Farook and Omar Mateen have

proven us sadly prescient.

Furthermore, Muslim immigration is showing no signs of slowing down. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, the immigrant Muslim population grew by 3.7 percent per year during the period between 2000 and 2010. However, over 450,000 immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries entered the U.S. between 2010 and 2014, raising the immigrant Muslim population by an average of 4.5 percent per year over that period. We frequently warn about the capacity of "chain migration" — an immigrant sponsors a family member who sponsors another family member, etc. — to dramatically alter the immigrant population in just a few decades. Will there be a sudden "surge" in Muslim immigration sponsored by the most recent waves? No one can say for sure, but the potential is certainly there.

Even in the absence of an unexpected surge, Pew estimates that the Muslim American population will continue to grow in both absolute and relative terms. By 2050, 8.1 million Americans are projected to be Muslims — many more than the total number of Muslims in France today — or about 2.1 percent of the American population. They will likely outnumber Jews in the U.S. even before 2040.

Crucially, only about half of the growth in the Muslim population predicted by Pew is due to births outnumbering deaths. The other half is the result of further immigration. In other words, a ban on Muslim immigration would make a major difference in both reducing Pew's projected growth numbers and also in protecting against a larger surge that no one can anticipate. Policymakers need to ask themselves if they are comfortable with current trends. How confident are they that the U.S. can continue to add to its Muslim population without developing a "homegrown" terrorism problem on the level faced by Western Europe? The recent events in Orlando, San Bernardino, Fort Hood, and elsewhere suggest their confidence should not be high. ■

**In all these places, the relations between Muslim and peoples of other civilizations — Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Hindu, Chinese, Buddhist, Jewish — have been generally antagonistic; most of these relations have been violent at some point in the past; many have been violent in the 1990s. Wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peaceably with their neighbors.... Muslims make up about one-fifth of the world's population but in the 1990s they have been far more involved in intergroup violence than the people of any other civilization. The evidence is overwhelming.**

**Three different compilations of data thus yield the same conclusion: In the early 1990s Muslims were engaged in more intergroup violence than were non-Muslims, and two-thirds to three-quarters of intercivilizational wars were between Muslims and non-Muslims. Islam's borders are bloody, and so are its innards. ■**

—Samuel P. Huntington

*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (pp. 256-258)